

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



Fire This Time!



"A Time to Break Silence"
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Mural by Don Miller in Washington, D.C.

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**THE CURRENT CLIMATE
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Mural by Kamau Ayuboo & Eric Norberg in San Francisco



**Hands off
Yemen!**

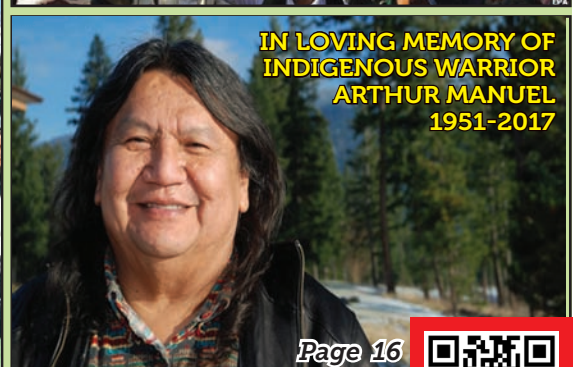
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**WOMEN MARCHING
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**We are Ready to Resist
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**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
INDIGENOUS WARRIOR
ARTHUR MANUEL
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15 Years of War & Occupation in AFGHANISTAN



By Nita Palmer

More than a decade and a half has passed since the first US bombs began to rain down on Afghanistan, adding their scars to the lush green valleys and soaring mountain peaks already marred by decades of war.

The US-NATO coalition charged into Afghanistan with promises of liberation and a better life for the Afghan people. This would of course be brought about by the defeat of the Taliban, those terrible rulers who allegedly harboured those responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center.

Like all those would-be conquerors and ‘liberators’ who came before them, however, US and NATO forces found themselves caught in the Afghan trap which is known as ‘the graveyard of empires’. To take control of Afghanistan should have been child’s play for the great might of the United States Army and their allies. The country had no real military to speak of, or even a complex government structure to dismantle. Yet sixteen years later, US-NATO forces have not achieved ‘victory’ in Afghanistan. Various commentators and analysts speculate about the nature of the US-NATO failure in Afghanistan: perhaps there were not enough troops? Was the corruption too rampant, or Afghan society too tribal? Opinions abound, but most miss the mark: Afghans do not want foreign occupiers on their land, or those who would attempt to ‘liberate’ them at gunpoint. Resistance to foreign occupation is in the very bones of the Afghan people, and there

can be no victory over a people who will fight until their last breath against foreign invaders.

The US and NATO will never destroy the Afghan resistance. However, they can – and have – destroyed millions of Afghan lives. At least tens of thousands of Afghans have lost their lives in the war. In fact, the number of victims is more likely in the hundreds of thousands, but accurate records have never been kept. These victims leave behind children that will grow up without a mother or father, parents who will never again hear the sweet laughter of their child, brothers and sisters with whom they will never again play.

US air strikes increased by 40% in 2016, the fifteenth year of war. The first half of 2016 saw the highest civilian casualty rate since record-keeping began in 2009, according to

UN data. At least 1,601 civilians were killed. Nearly all the deaths – 1,509 of them – were children.

Today, 623,000 Afghans are internally displaced, forced to abandon their homes due to lack of security or ability to find work to feed their families. The United Nations predicts this number will increase by 450,000 in 2017. In addition, the UN expects nearly a million refugees who have been living in Pakistan to be forced to return to Afghanistan later this year. This would leave nearly 10% of the Afghan population without homes.

“The constant stream of displaced families means that a state of continual emergency has become the norm in Afghanistan,” said Danielle Moylan, spokeswoman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Each year, dozens Afghans – mainly children and the elderly – die of

U.S. plane attacked the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan killing 42 patients and health workers and injuring many more. 2015.





Afghan children line up for food at Maslakh refugee camp near Herat, Western Afghanistan.

exposure in refugee camps during the bitterly cold Afghan winter, adding to the death toll of this brutal war.

Health care in Afghanistan also remains in crisis, with hospitals chronically understaffed and underfunded. A 2014 report by Medcins Sans Frontieres found that one in five Afghans had a close friend or relative who had died within the previous year due to lack of access to medical care.

Women's health care remains particularly poor, with the maternal mortality rate still one of the highest in the world. The crisis in women's health is greatly exacerbated by war: many women are forced to starve or go into prostitution to feed their children if their husbands die. Others become opium addicts or attempt suicide in an attempt to escape their desperate conditions. The number of women addicts as well as the number of women who attempt suicide has been rising year over year.

The Afghan education system – which the US government hailed as one of its great ‘successes’ – has been exposed by numerous reports to be a sham. “The few schools that did get up and running were dangerous, ramshackle buildings with fewer students—especially fewer girls—than official records attest,” Bonnie Kristian wrote for Foreign Policy magazine in September 2016.

Sixteen years after the US-NATO invasion, ninety percent of women and sixty-three percent of men in Afghanistan's rural areas still cannot read or write, according to UNESCO.

The facts which point to the utter failure of the US and NATO to bring any sort of improvement in human or democratic rights to the country goes on: 81% of Afghans do not have job security, according to government statistics. Unemployment is on the rise; corruption is rampant and fuelled by the US, according to the US' own Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

Even a military victory over the Taliban has failed. The Taliban today control about 40% of Afghanistan, and much of the remainder of the country is in the hands of either local warlords or more dangerous terrorist groups such as ISIS. The country is more of a ‘haven for terrorism’ today than ever.

By every measure of US-NATO ‘goals’ in Afghanistan, this war has been a failure. However, we should not expect a voluntary departure of foreign forces from Afghanistan. While their ‘nation-building’ project may not have established a successful government or a better life for Afghans, it has provided the US government with the ability to maintain a permanent military presence

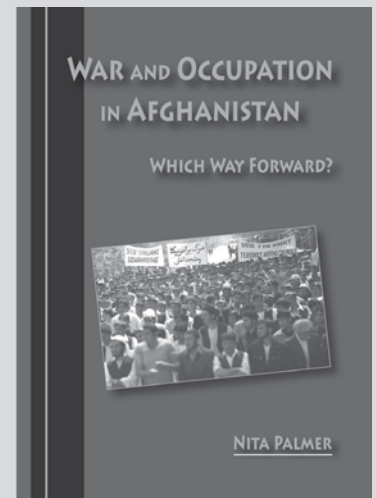
in the country, which will advance their strategic and economic goals in the region. If there is to be an end to this long war, it will be because we the people in the US, Canada and around the world fight for it.

Around the world, the sleeping giant of poor and working people demanding justice has begun to rise. We have many battles to fight, but surely one of those battles must be for the liberation of Afghanistan from foreign occupation. For sixteen long years, the Afghan people have been fighting the very same governments which have been cutting away at our rights and freedoms in our own countries. We owe the Afghan people our active support and struggle against this brutal and unjust war.

*Follow Nita Palmer on Twitter:
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Battle of Ideas Press

**WAR AND OCCUPATION
IN AFGHANISTAN
WHICH WAY FORWARD?**



BY NITA PALMER

Nita Palmer is an author and researcher on the war in Afghanistan. She is a member of the editorial board of Vancouver, Canada-based social justice newspaper Fire This Time.

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REPEAL BILL C-51!

ISLAMOPHOBIA, OUR HUMAN RIGHTS AND WHY TRUDEAU IS PART OF THE PROBLEM



Talk given by Thomas Davies on January 30, 2016 at 100th Weekly Action forum at the Vancouver Public Library.

So Bill C-51 has been a law in Canada for over a year. It was called the “Anti Terrorism Act 2015” and was justified as a necessary to protect people in Canada against terrorism. It was a huge bill that involved changing the criminal code, the roles of the spy agencies and police forces, relations between government agencies among many other changes. Basically though, the government is writing itself a big blank cheque to do whatever they want in the name of “national security”. The most blatant examples is that under Bill C-51, CSIS, Canada’s Spy agency, is able to apply to pre-authorise violating the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. To pre-authorize breaking any law in Canada. As long as they are not violating your sexual integrity or killing you, everything else is fair game. All they need to do is apply to one judge in a secret tribunal.

The case that Stephen Harper made when introducing this Bill was completely based in Islamophobia. Complete overblown paranoid hype about the so-called war on terrorism. He was talking about “terrorist tentacles” reaching out onto Canada. He was talking about people who supposedly detest our freedoms and “plurality”. That was what was used to justify Bill C-51. This islamophobia. This division. This fear. We are seeing the consequences of that today. We saw that consequences of this yesterday in Quebec with the six people that were killed while praying in the mosque.

So Justin Trudeau can say whatever he wants. He can issue whatever kind of glowing tweet he wants about the rights of immigrants and refugees, but as long as he continues to support and uphold Bill C-51 he’s part of the same problem – of division, of disruption and islamophobia which is creating these

conditions of fear. If you read about what the Liberal government has written about why they’ve kept Bill C-51, it’s very difficult to find any difference between what they and the Conservatives are saying.

So the question is, why do they keep it? If human rights organizations say Bill C-51 violates human rights, and Justin Trudeau says he defends human rights, why does he keep it? If legal organizations say it’s a total legal black hole, and Justin Trudeau says he supports the rule of law, then why does he keep it?

I think Bill C-51 has always been a lot more about creating a climate of fear and creating space for the government to target opposition than it was ever about security. We saw that play out so blatantly yesterday, where they were unable to stop the shooter who was a supporter of Trump, of white nationalism – all of these things which have been fomented in Canada and the United States

What they’ve used as the thin edge of the wedge to attack our rights is this Islamophobia and racism. They start with a vulnerable community. The campaign of islamophobia has been so strong to justify their wars abroad, and it’s been the same thing at home as well. So if we are able to rationalize or accept that young Muslim men in Canada have been detained on “security certificates” for years on end, indefinitely, without ever being able to see the evidence against them. If we can accept that, accept that one group of people can have their rights taken away, that’s one step towards everybody else’s rights being taken away.

That’s why Islamophobia is so dangerous. And that’s why Bill C-51 is so dangerous. Because it really is the thin edge of the wedge.

Does anybody here think that their healthcare got better in the last 10 years? Education? Social services? Is there anything that has gotten any better in Canada in the last 10 years? Maybe now they have more sophisticated weapons, more sophisticated bombs and ways to kill people. The government of Canada knows

that the majority of people are not benefiting from their policies and the way that they are conducting business. And they know that when people get angry they have a tendency to organize. So they need to be prepared for when people are organizing even more.

This is nothing new. This use of racism to justify attacks has happened every single time Canada has gone to war. In World War I it was the Ukrainians, Austrians and Germans. They started targeting them, and then moved very quickly to trade union organizers. In World War II – thousands of Japanese-Canadians were forced into internment camps. As soon as they had done that, they moved on to anti-war organizers and labour union organizers.

We have seen in the United States how governments are willing to go against our rights, but also how large and encouraging the fightback has been. There is still a lot of organizing that needs to happen, but people haven’t just let Trump do whatever he is trying to do.

Bill C-51 is important because we need it for every single social justice struggle that we need to engage in in the coming years. There is a lot of them, and we need to be active in a lot of different ways but if we don’t have the space to be active we can’t do it.

The exciting thing is, and I repeat it to myself and whenever I have the chance to talk, that they wouldn’t be attacking our rights to organize if they weren’t afraid of what was possible if we used them – if they didn’t feel threatened by that. Because they know that the majority of people do not benefit from what the government is doing today and the majority of people in Canada would benefit from some big changes.

This is an opportunity. Bill C-51 attacks so many different people in so many different ways. We are all under attack so we all have an interest to join the struggle, and that’s why I think that we’ve been able to organize for 100 consecutive weeks. And like I said, every single week we find meaning in the work we are doing, in the interactions that we are having, the education, organization, and mobilization.

Recently someone wrote, “Remember sitting in History thinking ‘If I was alive then, I would’ve...’ Well, you’re alive now. Whatever you are doing is whatever you would have done.” I think it’s a good lesson. We live in important, dangerous, dynamic and crucial times. So it’s really important that we play an active role in these times. That poor and working people realize their power in coming together and fighting against the politics of division and fear and repealing Bill C-51 and defending all of our democratic and human rights.

**REPEAL BILL C-51!
NO TO ISLAMOPHOBIA!
OUR SECURITY LIES IN DEFENDING
THE RIGHTS OF ALL!**

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59

THE FIGHT CONTINUES!

WORKING GROUP TO STOP BILL C-51 MARKS 100 WEEKLY ACTIONS



By Thomas Davies

Monday January 30th marked the 100th weekly action of the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51. Perhaps unprecedented in Canada - over the last two years, the group has never missed a week of holding picket and petition drives, forums, conferences and banner drops across Vancouver and the surrounding areas. As it becomes increasingly clear that the Liberal government has no intention of addressing the massive human rights violations of this “anti-terrorism” legislation – speaking out and building an independent movement to repeal Bill C-51 has become even more important. In recognition of the organizing which has already taken place, and that which is yet to come, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 called for both a picket and petition campaign and a public forum to mark its 100th consecutive week of actions.

The 100th action returned to the busiest transit point in Vancouver, Broadway and Commercial. It began with a moment of silence for the six Muslim men who were murdered while praying at a mosque in Quebec City the evening before. Given that Bill C-51 has been justified by the Canadian government using Islamophobic rhetoric, recognizing the connection was extremely important.

Indigenous elders Kelly White and Gordon August welcomed the action with their drums and songs while picketers chanted, held banners and signs, collected petition signatures as well as speaking to the news outlets who came to cover the action.

From the speaker system and in individual conversations while gather petition signatures to Repeal Bill C-51, it was emphasized the the Liberal government has continued to break its

promises on Bill C-51. More than a year after election promises to make “significant changes” a “priority”, Bill C-51 remains in its entirety.

A parliamentary national security oversight committee has been proposed, but its members as well as its access and ability to share information are all controlled by the Prime Minister’s Office. A so-called “public consultation” instead turned into an opportunity for the Liberals to promote new legislation which could allow them massive access to all of our online and phone application history.

The picket’s materials table continued to be busy the entire action, and some people walking by stopped to hold protest signs and join the action. This kind of dynamic public outreach has sustained the campaign throughout the last two year, and it shows no sign of slowing down.

The evening forum at the Central Branch of the Vancouver Public Library featured Working Group organizers Thomas Davies and Brian Sproule discussing the history of Bill C-51, and how to continue building the movement to defeat it. The Working Group has continued to see significant public interest in the demand to Repeal Bill C-51 and anger has grown with the



Canadian government as it maintains the status quo.

In response the speakers urged that we cannot accept “business as usual” when we are seeing the terrible consequences both of the these human rights violating “anti-terrorism” laws, and of the racism and islamophobia used to justify their existence. The movement to Repeal Bill C-51 must continue to spread out, connect with the many diverse communities negatively impacted, and continue to educate, organize and mobilize to defeat this dangerous, unjust and unnecessary legislation.

The Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 is committed to do everything within its power to Repeal Bill C-51. Everyone is incited to join us during our weekly actions to continue the fight! We will not stop until the law is gone.

*Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter:
@thomasdavies59*



Top diplomatic negotiator in Cuba warns Trump: AGGRESSION DOESN'T WORK

By Helen Yaffe
& Jonathan Watts

Senior Cuban negotiators say the island will not be cowed by intimidation and bluster from Donald Trump, despite the incoming US president's threat to rekindle cold war animosities.

"Aggression, pressure, conditions, impositions do not work with Cuba. This is not the way to attempt to have even a minimally civilised relationship with Cuba," Josefina Vidal, a foreign ministry department head, told the Guardian.

Cuba's wait-and-see approach is guided by Trump's unpredictability – and the knowledge that all previous 11 US administrations held talks with representatives from Havana despite the often hawkish public rhetoric coming from Washington.

Vidal has led the island's negotiating team with the US since 2013, including 18 months of secret discussions, facilitated by Canada and the Vatican, that led to the joint announcement by Cuban president Raúl Castro and Barack Obama on 17 December 2014 of a normalisation of diplomatic relations.

Trump has warned that he is prepared to undo that progress. During the US election campaign, he told an audience of rightwing Cuban exiles in Miami: "All of the concessions that Obama has granted the Castro regime were done through executive order, which means the next president can reverse them and that is exactly what I will do unless the Castro regime meets our demands."

But Cuban officials say that they plan to



Clockwise from top: Cuban Students rally at University of Havana; Josefina Vidal, Cuba's top diplomatic negotiator with the U.S. and foreign ministry department head; U.S. President, Trump / Cuban President, Raul Castro.

wait for action rather than words because Trump has repeatedly flip-flopped on the issue of rapprochement – and also put his business interests above his country's laws.

During the campaign, it emerged that Trump sent his corporate representatives to Cuba in 1998, and again in the 2000s to probe for openings, in violation of the US trade embargo. Three months after launching his campaign to become the Republican party candidate, Trump was the only GOP contender to express a positive opinion of the reopening of bilateral relations, saying "the concept of opening with Cuba is fine".

Trump's transition team includes several figures linked to Cuban American groups which take a hard line on Cuba, advocating the continuation of the US blockade and an end to rapprochement.

Dr Yleem Poblete has been named to Trump's national security council "landing team", lawyer John Barsa to the Department of Homeland Security, and lawyer Mauricio Claver-Carone an adviser to the treasury department. Claver-Carone

is executive director of the US-Cuba Democracy Pac and among the fiercest opponents of Obama's Cuba policy.

But Vidal says it is "too early" to predict which path the new administration will follow. "There are also other functionaries, businessmen, that Trump has named, including in government roles, who are in favour of business with Cuba, people who think that the US will benefit from cooperation with Cuba, on issues linked to the national security of the US," she points out.

Her analysis of Trump's unpredictability – particularly in contrast to Obama – is echoed by Ricardo Alarcón, until recently considered the third-most influential man in Cuban politics.

"For two years we have been talking to a sophisticated president with an intelligent, skillful discourse. Now we have a gentleman who is capable of saying anything and nobody is sure what he is going to do," said Alarcón, who spent 30 years representing Cuba at the United Nations and another 20 years as president of the country's national assembly before

retiring in 2013.

From the 1970s to the 2000s, Alarcón led secret talks with US officials through a backdoor channel that was first opened by Che Guevara in 1961, just eight months after diplomatic relations had officially been broken off.

Whether this historical willingness to engage in discussion is continued under Trump will depend on whether the new president takes a pragmatic economic approach or a confrontational political line.

Rafael Hernandez, the director of Temas, an influential journal of political and social debate published in Havana, believes Trump's business instincts will prevail over the threats.

"This is all bluff. And we are accustomed to the bluff from the governments of the United States," Hernandez says. "I don't underestimate Trump's capacity for aggression, I am simply saying that this is a state that is motivated by interests and the interests are in favour of business, and in the case of Cuba lifting the blockade is nothing more than responding to the interests of business."

There is little appetite in the US Congress for lifting the embargo, but over the past two years the Obama White House has passed a number of measures to improve ties between the two neighbours.

Listing the fruits of engagement at a conference last month, Vidal noted that in addition to Obama's visit to Cuba in March 2015 – the first by a US president for 88 years – there have also been 23 high-level visits, 51 technical meetings and 12 agreements signed in areas ranging from cooperation on the environment and air travel to health and the fight against drug trafficking. Twelve more were in the pipeline.

There has also been a dramatic spike in the movement of people between the two nations. Last week it was revealed that nearly 285,000 US citizens visited Cuba in 2016, a growth of 74% on the previous year. Add a similar number of Cuban American visitors and over half a million people travelled to Cuba from the US.

Full migration in the opposite direction, however, was disincentivised last week, when the White House announced the end of the "wet foot, dry foot" migration policy, which privileged Cuban arrivals in the US over migrants from other countries, granting them automatic residency and

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Fire This Time 2017 Campaign

GOAL: \$30,000

A Fundraising Appeal!

JANUARY 1 TO MARCH 1 2017



THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING AND WRITING ABOUT FIRE THIS TIME ►►►



"Fire This Time is the best alternative newspaper in Canada!"

"This is the only newspaper I trust!"

"fantastic, bold & great analysis"

Dear Fire This Time Reader, Fire This Time Newspaper is an independent newspaper which reflects the interest of working and oppressed people and believes that every international fight is local and every local fight is international.

In the past year, Fire This Time has continued to amplify our distribution and ensure that the newspaper gets into the hands of new readers beyond BC, both nationally and internationally. We have sent writers to be on the ground participating and reporting from many important struggles for social and environmental justice. We have been everywhere from Standing Rock to London to the Dominican Republic and Cuba, from Seattle and Washington DC to Montreal, Calgary, Ottawa, Toronto, and more. We have

brought first-hand reports from activities and conferences, on topics such as the war on Yemen and the Middle East, the struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline, freedom for political prisoners in the U.S., as well as Venezuela and Cuba solidarity initiatives.

But now we really need your help!

One time donations and monthly sustaining donations are gratefully accepted! Any donation of a total of \$250 or more will receive a bound volume of all 12 issues of next year's Fire This Time newspaper!

It's also important for you to know that you can pledge big or small donations to be paid over a period of time as well.



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**"The truth must not only be the truth, it must be told."
- Fidel**

SYSTEM CHANGE NOT CLIMATE CHANGE!

THE CURRENT CLIMATE CRISIS AND THE WAY FORWARD



By Thomas Davies

We live in a world of dynamic potentials. Nowhere is that seen more clearly than in the field of energy production. There are constantly incredible new developments made in our understanding of the planet we live on, and how to create sustainable solutions to meet our energy needs. On the flip side, governments are continuing to approve massive energy projects based on technologies and the exploitation of resources the vast majority of scientists say are not only extremely dangerous, but also unnecessary.

Take Canada and the United States – two of the most technologically advanced countries in the world. While Business Insider is reporting that wind and solar power projects are creating jobs 12 times as fast as the rest of the U.S. economy – President Trump demands that the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines be completed. At a time when the official position of the Canadian government is that, “The science is clear that human activities are driving unprecedented changes in the Earth’s climate, which pose significant risks to human health, security, and economic growth,” they approved the Kinder Morgan and Line 3 tar sands pipelines while also cheerleading for Trump’s Keystone XL announcement.

These projects would mean a significant commitment to continued development of the Alberta Tar Sands and make it impossible for either country to meet their United Nations CO2 emissions commitments.

We Stand with Standing Rock

Not only are these pipeline projects dangerous and unnecessary, they also being built without the consent of the many indigenous nations whose traditional territories they cross. In North Dakota, police have made over 700

arrests since the Standing Rock Sioux and their allies set up a camp to stop the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline. More than 15,000 people were present when the camp was at its largest, and they were able to force the Obama administration to halt construction and order an environmental review of the project. They are now attempting to bypass this completely as the US Army Corps of Engineers has just issued the final “easement” allowing drilling to start immediately.

Trump’s financial disclosures show he owned shares of Energy Transfer Partners, the company building the Dakota Access pipeline. His staff say he has sold that investment, but that has not yet been confirmed by any further financial disclosures.

Despite Trump, water protectors are committed to ensuring the pipeline is not built. “We have been saying something very simple from the beginning- Water is Life. We must stand for life. We cannot let the basic essence of who we are be destroyed. We must stand, so we are asking the world to stand with us,” said LaDonna Bravebull Allard, Director of Sacred Stone Camp.

US military veterans, who previously showed up in their thousands to stop the pipeline construction, are planning to return to Standing Rock as well.

Forcing the Issue

These pipelines make so little sense, that even a new Fortune Magazine article is titled, “Investors Should Steer Clear of the Keystone Pipeline”

It reports that:

“The oil industry is in trouble, beset by bankruptcies of junior companies, write-downs by major producers, and cancelled or drastically delayed projects across the board. The last thing it needs is the proposed

Keystone XL pipeline, which President Trump this week moved to reignite after only five days in office.”

Also:

“Public opposition to the project is so vast as to guarantee interminable litigation and the sort of costly headline civil disobedience that has worked so effectively against completion of the similarly financially rickety Dakota Access Pipeline. Climate policies enacted by international governing bodies pose risks to development of fossil-fuel resources everywhere. Divestment campaigns are gaining momentum...”

Kinder Morgan

Meanwhile Justin Trudeau has been having a rough time justifying his government’s recent pipeline approvals at “town hall” meetings across the country. He even decided against having a public meeting in British Columbia – due in obvious part to huge discontent with its approval of the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

In Vancouver, the Climate Convergence coalition has organized large and energetic demonstrations for Trudeau’s last two visits to Vancouver, and has committed to at least one demonstration every month until the pipeline projects are scrapped. There is also work being done to organize a national day of action.

Many indigenous nations are also asserting their opposition in the courts and through community organizing. One example is the Coldwater band in BC’s interior. They received a joint federal-provincial letter acknowledging the risk to their primary water source from the Kinder Morgan pipeline just one day before Trudeau approved the project.

As Coldwater Chief Lee Spahan said, “This is about our drinking water; it is our Standing Rock. It’ll be up to my membership how they

decide ... but we're going to do whatever it takes to protect our drinking water."

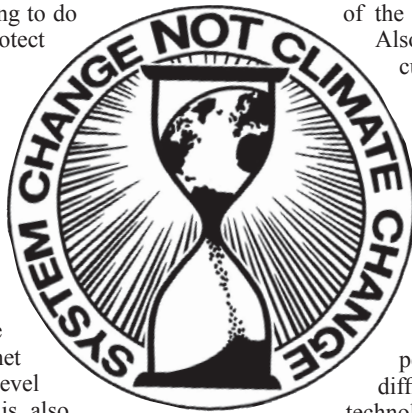
Another Way Forward - Cuba

While it is obvious that organized public opposition is having a significant effect in delaying or deterring many projects, it's true that many others are still built and the planet is nearing a dangerous level of global warming. It is also true that the entire situation is a waste of resources. Oil pipelines are a waste of resources which could be put towards developing sustainable projects, they are a waste of tax dollars which subsidize their construction, and overall it's a huge waste of valuable human energy organizing against them as well.

Imagine living in a country where the government's resources were not wasted in trying to force through oil pipelines, but instead towards projecting the environment. Socialist Cuba has been leading the world in sustainability for decades. A World Wildlife Fund study concluded it is the only sustainable country in the world - with both a high UN Human Development Index and a small ecological footprint.

Organic agriculture dominates Cuba. A recent article by Miguel Altieri, a Professor of Agroecology at University of California, Berkeley noted that, "Today Cuba has 383,000 urban farms, covering 50,000 hectares of otherwise unused land and producing more than 1.5 million tons of vegetables. The most productive urban farms yield up to 20 kg of food per square meter, the highest rate in the world, using no synthetic chemicals. Urban farms supply 50 to 70 percent or more of all the fresh vegetables consumed in cities such as Havana and Villa Clara."

Because of a reforestation program which started in 1998, forests make up 30.6 percent



of the island nation's land area. Also, the government is currently building 59 new solar energy parks, with 33 scheduled to be completed this year. Their goal is for one quarter of all energy produced in Cuba to be solar by 2030. This is especially important given that it is a small island of 11.5 million people which faces many difficulties in accessing new technologies because of the ongoing US blockade.

Sustainable development and environmental protection are actually part of the Cuba constitution - this is because the government prioritizes human development, not corporate profits.

System Change Not Climate Change

In the back and forth of elections and administrations, hard won victories are always unstable. The Keystone XL pipeline was shelved by Obama after widespread protest, only to be given new life by Trump. Not the environment's best friend either, Obama famously declared that under his administration, "We've added enough new oil and gas pipeline to encircle the earth." In Canada, many thought they were electing a Prime Minister who took the climate change crisis seriously after years of watching the Harper Conservative government completely disregard it. Now we are back to fighting against the many pipelines and other dangerous projects approved by the Trudeau government.

Ultimately to win we can't just organize from project to project. We need a more overall perspective that questions the system we live under. A system that places corporate profits above human needs. Capitalism has failed all but a small percentage of the super wealthy and their government friends. We can look to Cuba's example for a way towards a real and sustainable future on a global scale.

"System Change
Not
Climate
Change!"

"No Consent No
Pipelines!"

"From Standing
Rock to BC,
Make the Land
Pipeline Free!"

Follow Thomas Davies
on Twitter:
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In Cuba, "The most productive urban farms yield up to 20 kg of food per square meter, the highest rate in the world, using no synthetic chemicals."

continued from page 7
"Top diplomatic negotiator in Cuba warns Trump"

citizenship within one year.

Although commercial ties are minimal and financial restrictions remain in place, Obama used his executive powers to grant licences to selected US companies to operate in Cuba: six telecoms, four cruises, one hotel, eight airlines and two small banks. In mid-December, Google signed a deal with the Cuban government to install servers on the island that will speed up access to the internet.

On the eve of Trump's inauguration, the first legal Cuban export to the US in more than 50 years will take place, in the form of 40 tons of charcoal produced in Cuban cooperative farms.

As they wait to see how much of this will be dismantled or continued by Trump, Cuban official stress the benefits of closer ties with the US go far beyond the island's borders.

"These last two years show that many good things have been done not only for Cubans and for the Americans, but for others," Vidal says. "Because when Cuba and the US cooperate in confronting drug trafficking, this is an important contribution to the region; or when Cuba and the US cooperate in confronting [viruses such as] Zika, dengue and chikungunya, as we have been doing recently, we are making an important contribution to humanity. When Cuba and the US cooperated in Africa to fight Ebola, they made an important contribution to the health of the world."

But nothing is taken for granted. The Cuban Communist party's longterm development plan circulated for debate after the seventh congress in April 2016 makes no assumptions about changes in US policy toward Cuba. Raúl Castro has asserted the need for "civilised co-existence" with the US, but not at the cost of sovereignty and independence.

Dr Helen Yaffe is a fellow in the economic history department at the London School of Economics. The Cuban officials cited in the article were interviewed during research funded by a Rockefeller-LSE grant. The project is carried out with Nick Kitchen, from the US centre at LSE.

Jonathan Watts is the Guardian's Latin America Correspondent

www.theguardian.com

An earlier proposal to block all metals mining in El Salvador has stagnated for years in Congress without being discussed.

The movement against destructive mining activity in El Salvador received a boost Monday as leaders of the Catholic church in the Central American country presented a bill in Congress aimed at blocking mining and protecting citizens from “serious contamination.”

“The objective of the bill is to protect our country and its population from serious environmental contamination, especially of water, an inevitable consequence of open pit mining exploitation,” the archbishop of San Salvador, Jose Luis Escobar Alas, said in a press conference Sunday.

The religious leader of the Catholic-majority country stressed that there must be legislation to outlaw mining in order to ensure the negative consequences are avoided in the future.

Escobar added that he hopes lawmakers support the proposal and propel the bill into law.

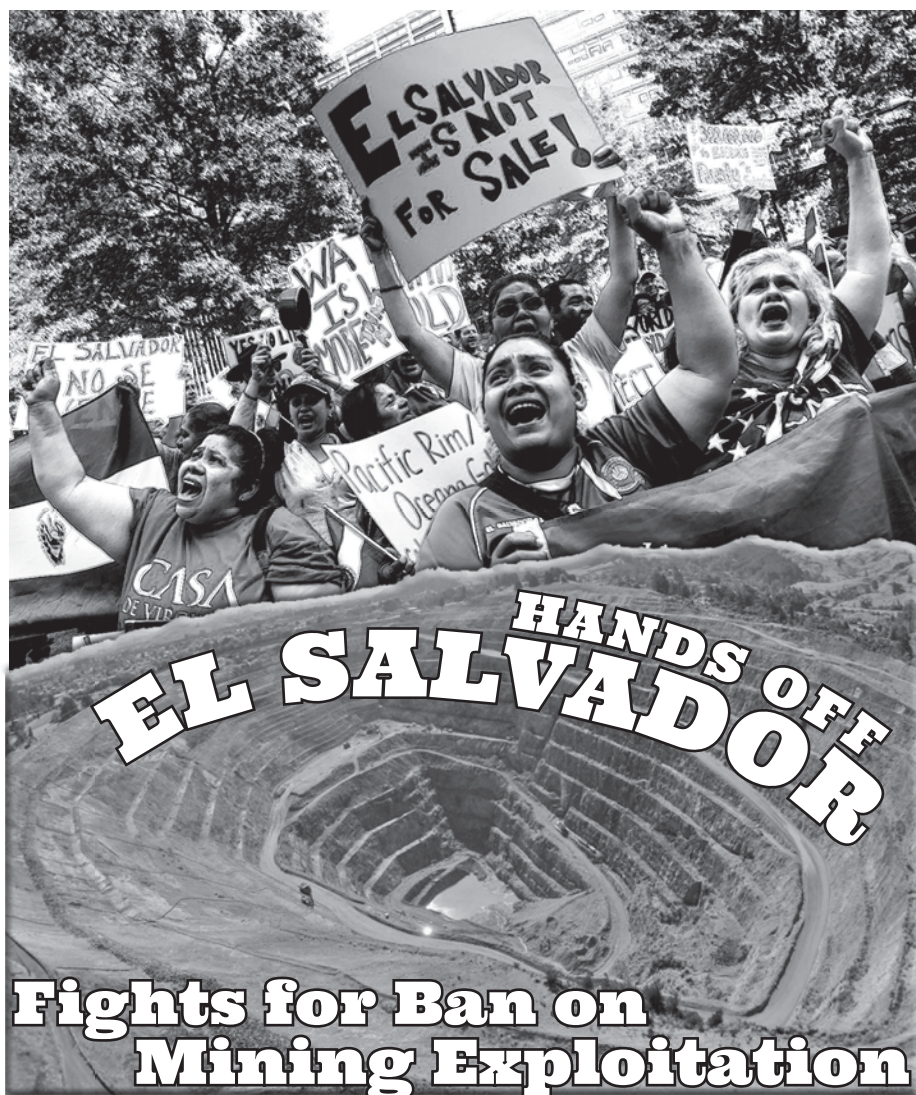
But it’s not the first time such a bill has been brought forward in the Congress, and the latest proposal is likely to continue to face an uphill battle in the conservative-dominated assembly.

In 2013, a national coalition against metals mining presented a bill designed to prohibit the activity, but it has still not been discussed in Congress.

Proposed legislation to protect water rights in El Salvador has similarly faced resistance from conservative factions that have long showed staunch support for private interests. The conservative opposition in Congress — made up mostly of the right-wing Arena party that governed the country for two decades until the progressive FMLN won the presidency in 2009 — has long stalled a proposal to adopt a General Water Law aimed at protecting the right to water and regulating corporate use of the resource.

While the Arena party has moved to curb mining activity in the country in the past, efforts by the FMLN to institutionalize a ban have been unsuccessful. In 2008, President Antonio Saca, then of the Arena party, implemented a moratorium on new mining concessions. The move sparked a nearly decade-long, multi-million dollar lawsuit, launched against the country by international mining giant OceanaGold for infringing on its future profits with the ban, which included a decision not to renew the company’s permit to extract gold. El Salvador finally won the David and Goliath battle against the corporation last year.

The moratorium set a powerful precedent for standing up for national sovereignty and clean water against transnational corporate interests. Nevertheless, efforts by the newly-

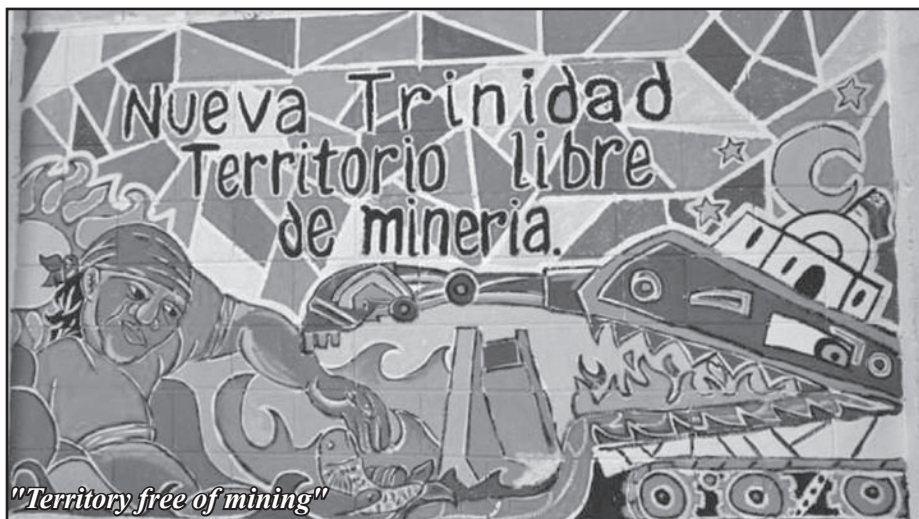


elected FMLN beginning in 2009 — the same year OceanaGold filed the lawsuit — to turn the moratorium into law have not come to fruition.

Although the law has not been passed, the government has continued to uphold a ban on

new mining projects through decree. However, environmental activists and affected communities argue that a more formal law is needed to ensure the long term protection of water resources and the environment.

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From Obama to Trump, Vancouver Still Demands LIFT THE U.S. BLOCKADE ON CUBA!

By Janine Solanki

On January 13, 2017, outgoing US President Obama signed an executive order declaring Cuba a "National Security Threat." This hostile act allows the president to use national emergency resources against Cuba, including to enforce sanctions. Flashback to December 17, 2014 when Obama made the historic announcement that the US would be normalizing relations with Cuba and working towards ending the over 55 year old blockade of Cuba. Over the last two years many positive steps forward have been made, such as the opening of embassies in Washington and Havana, and some limited easing of travel and trade restrictions. However, the blockade of Cuba is still in place and continuing to subject Cuba to eco-

nomical hardship and makes access to everything from medicines to sports equipment very difficult.

With Obama making one of his final acts as US president to deal another blow against Cuba instead of trying to make progress on lifting the blockade, we can see that Obama's motivations were never based on fairness or justice. In Vancouver, Canada and around the world, Cuba solidarity activists knew from the time of Obama's December 2014 announcement that

this signaled an opportunity, not an inevitability, for the blockade to be lifted and that it was more important than ever to put the pressure on the US to end the blockade. Now with Donald Trump as US president, the necessity to organize in solidarity with Cuba for an end to the blockade is even more critical. Back on November 28th 2016 Trump tweeted that if Cuba doesn't make a better "deal" that he would "terminate deal". On February 3rd, 2017 US Press Secretary Sean Spicer notified the press that the administration is "in the midst of a full review of all U.S. policies towards Cuba". Clearly neither of these statements are positive for moving towards lifting the US blockade on Cuba.

In Vancouver, Canada the Friends of Cuba

Against the US Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB-Van) formed soon after Obama's 2014 announcement in order to organize against the US blockade on Cuba as the new door of US/Cuba negotiations opened. On January 17th, 2017 FCAB organized its monthly protest action which month after month has been bringing protesters out in-front of the US consulate. Cuba solidarity activists picketed and chanted with the demands of "Lift the Blockade on Cuba Now!" and "Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!" In between rounds of picketing, protesters heard from local speakers as well as a solidarity phone message from Ottawa Cuba Connections, who on the same day also held monthly picket actions against the US blockade in front of the US Embassy in Ottawa.

Whatever president is in office in the US, Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade is committed to continue organizing for the US blockade to be lifted and for Guantanamo to be returned to Cuba. Join FCAB on the 17th of every month in front of the US consulate, marking the day of Obama's December 17th 2014 announcement of normalization which has yet to be realized. For more info and upcoming events check out <http://vancubavsblockade.org> or follow on Twitter @NoBlockadeVan

End the Blockade on Cuba Now!
Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!
US Government Stop the Campaign of 'Regime Change' in Cuba and Immediately Stop Interfering in Cuba's Sovereignty and Self-Determination!

By Janine Solanki

On Thursday January 26, Venezuelan President Maduro announced that the Venezuelan government had reached the goal of building 1.4 million homes for Venezuelans across the country. The public housing mission was launched by former President Chavez in 2010 to provide free or low cost housing for all Venezuelans, and has continued under President Maduro.

You might think that such an impressive accomplishment would be reflected in North American news media. However, the mainstream news is saturated with reports of economic crisis in Venezuela, with the blame squarely placed on the Venezuelan government and the Bolivarian Revolution. However Venezuela is not simply facing an economic crisis, but a US-led economic war.

Despite this economic war, the Venezuelan government and the Bolivarian revolution has not reduced it's commitment to improving the lives of its people. Venezuela's 2017 total state budget allocates 73% to social missions, public works and neighborhood organizations known as communal councils.

Here in Vancouver, Canada, social justice activists have joined together to show their support for Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution and to protest US interference, sanctions and threats against Venezuela. The Fire This Time

Movement for Social Justice Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has been holding monthly protest actions since December 2015, and were out on the streets again on January 6th, 2016. Activists first gathered for a picket action in front of the US Consulate in Downtown Vancouver, raising picket signs and voices to demand "US Hands Off Venezuela!" After rounds of picketing and hearing from speakers, protesters moved to in-front of the Vancouver Art Gallery to setup a petition drive and informational display declaring "Maduro is our President". Passers-by on the busy downtown streets stopped the table to pick up information and talk with organizers, and teams of petitioners collected signatures demanding that the US government stop its sanctions and interference in Venezuela, including revoking Obama's Presidential Decree which labels Venezuela as an "unusual and extraordinary threat to US national security".

The great gains of Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution, even in the face of counter-revolutionary forces and an economic war, shows us a lot about how a government can prioritize its people over profits. The

Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign is committed to working in solidarity with Venezuela, both on the streets in protest and

VANCOUVER STANDS IN DEFENSE OF



VENEZUELA'S BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION!

in public education about the real situation in Venezuela. For more info on events in solidarity with Venezuela visit www.firethistime.net or follow @FTT_np on Twitter.

U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!
Repeal the Decree Now!
U.S. Respect the Sovereignty & Self-Determination of the Venezuelan People!
Long Live the Venezuelan Bolivarian Revolution!

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki

HANDS OFF YEMEN

STOP BOMBING, KILLING & DESTRUCTION

By Azza Rojbi

"Sometimes I sleep two, three hours and then I wake up and stay up until morning... I remember my children and my home... Our lives were humble but it was a quiet life, a good life, we were happy... we lost everything." Those were the words of Abdullah al-Ibbi as he told a BBC reporter about the night where a Saudi-led coalition airstrike hit his home in Saada. The airstrike killed 27 members of his family including 17 children with the youngest being only one month old.

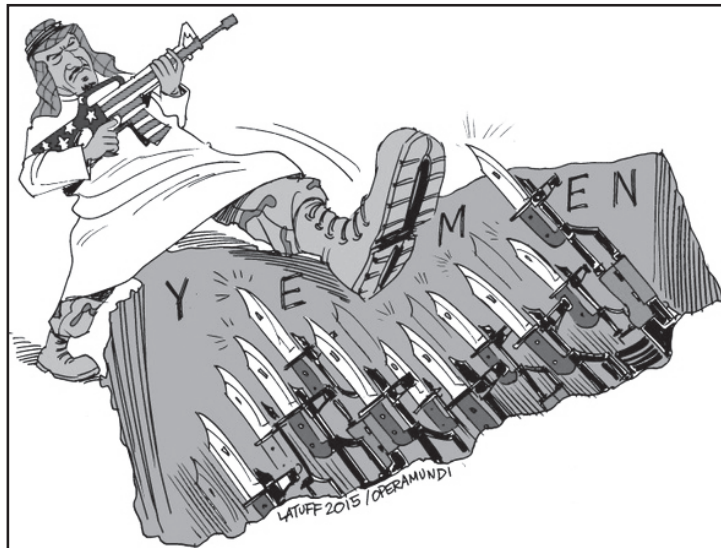
Horrific stories like this have emerged time and time again about the Saudi-led coalition's disregard for Yemeni life and their brutal bombing campaign against the people of Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition, backed by the U.S., began its military campaign in Yemen in March 2015 under the pretense of re-instating Yemen's 'legitimate' president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. It is important to note that Mansour Hadi's presidential term had expired and he resigned from the presidency on January 22, 2015 later fleeing to Saudi Arabia. Any claim of legitimacy is a complete farce!

Today almost two years after the beginning of the Saudi-led bombing campaign, the coalition has been unsuccessful in restoring their puppet, Mansour Hadi, to power. Their claims of wanting to bring peace and stability to the people of Yemen have only brought death and destruction to the already impoverished country.

Humanitarian Crisis is Worsening

On January 16, 2017 the UN Yemen Humanitarian Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick told reporters at a press conference in Sanaa that, "the estimates are that over 10,000 people have been killed in this conflict and almost 40,000 people injured." He also added that those numbers are based on lists gathered by health facilities in Yemen but that the actual death toll might be higher.

A UNICEF report on the situation in Yemen from December 2016 indicated, "the state of health of children in the Middle East's poorest country has never been as catastrophic as it is today." It continued, "at least one child dies every ten minutes in Yemen because of



preventable diseases such as diarrhea, malnutrition and respiratory tract infections."

The same report noted that, "less than a third of the country's population has

access to medical care. Less than half of health facilities are functional." The Saudi-led coalition has targeted hospitals and healthcare facilities with its airstrikes and bombing.

Medical facilities haven't been the only target in the Saudi-led/U.S.-backed coalition airstrikes on Yemen. The coalition is also responsible for bombing homes, schools, markets, factories, warehouses storing humanitarian aid and

even refugee camps. The Guardian newspaper reported that, "a United Nations panel investigating the Saudi-led bombing campaign in Yemen has uncovered 'widespread and systematic' attacks on civilian targets."

Saudi Arabia investigates its own crimes!

"In response to claims that the Saudi lead military coalition have committed violations while conducting the Decisive Storm and the Hope Restoration military operations to support the legitimate government of Yemen, an independent Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) was formed to assess these claims and accidents. The JIAT consists of 14 members with experience and competence in military and legal fields. The members of the JIAT are from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Republic of Yemen, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates." The above is how the Saudi Press Agency described the Joint Incidents Assessment Team created by Saudi Arabia in the guise of independently investigating civilian killings in Yemen.

Trying to research more on the JIAT, its mandate, its methodology or any information on its members is mission impossible. However from the little we know, it is clear that any claim of 'impartiality' or 'independence' is a

pure sham!

Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners formed the JIAT and they appointed its members. The 14 members are citizens and officials from countries involved in the coalition bombing of Yemen. This is an obvious conflict of interest. How are we to trust Saudi Arabia and its coalition allies to investigate their

On the first day of the start of the Saudi-led bombing campaign on Yemen the U.S. government expressed its total support for the operation. A White House statements indicated that "President Obama has authorized the provision of logistical and intelligence support to GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] -led military operations. While U.S. forces are not taking direct military action in Yemen in support of this effort, we are establishing a Joint Planning Cell with Saudi Arabia to coordinate

only during the last 8 years of Obama's presidency.

The new Trump administration is no different than its predecessor. "We are very, very optimistic about the Trump administration. And on working closely with it to deal with the many challenges, not only in our region, but in the world," Saudi Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed al-Jubeir said during a news conference in Riyadh on January 24, 2017.

Trump has continued Obama's legacy of drone war on Yemen. In his first three days as the new President of the United States, the U.S. military carried out 3 drone strikes in Yemen as part of their so-called fight against terrorism.

On January 29, 2017, Donald Trump ordered his first military raid in the Al Bayda Governorate in Yemen, conducted by American and Emirati Special Forces. The U.S. claimed they were attacking a suspected Al-Qaeda camp. The raid was a complete disaster, claiming the life of a U.S. Navy Seal and over 30 people, including 10 women and children.



own war crimes?!

This so-called Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) is basically a mockery of independent investigation! Since its creation in January 2016, the JIAT, has only investigated 14 airstrike incidents that were reported and condemned by the UN and other international human rights organizations. The Joint Incidents Assessment Team cleared the Saudi-led/U.S.-backed coalition of any wrong doing in 10 and acknowledged "shortcomings" in 4 of the airstrikes, of course as a cover to try to legitimize their reports.

The United States has Blood on its Hands

Saudi Arabia would not have been able to carry on its brutal and criminal military campaign against Yemen without the backing and full support of the United States government and its imperialist allies. Saudi Arabia and the U.S. don't have the well being of Yemenis in mind. They are following their own strategic interest in the region. The U.S. and its imperialist allies aim to regain their grip over Yemen and further expand their hegemony over North Africa and the Middle East.



U.S. military and intelligence support." The U.S. military has been providing the Saudi-led coalition with air-refueling for coalition fighter jets, as well as, intelligence gathered by U.S. surveillance planes flying over Yemen.

According to an article by The Intercept, "the U.S. has supplied Saudi Arabia with more than \$20 billion worth of weapons during its Yemen campaign, including thousands of MK-82 bombs." Almost 10% of U.S. arms exports go to Saudi Arabia. The U.S. sold Saudi Arabia over \$115 billion worth of weapons

Hands off Yemen!

As peace loving people living in North America we need to stand up and defend the right of the Yemeni people to their own future without foreign intervention. Here in Canada for example, we need to continue to hold the Canadian government accountable for their support of Saudi Arabia and demand a cancelation of

Canada's \$15 billion arms deal to supply Saudi Arabia with armored military vehicles.

The Yemeni people have showed bravery and courage in their resistance to the Saudi-led aggression on their country. Let's join them in fighting for their right to life, freedom and sovereignty.

**US/Saudi Arabia Hands off Yemen!
Stop Bombing Yemen!**

**Lift the Naval, Aerial and Land Blockade
on Yemen!**

*Follow Azza on Twitter:
@Azza_R14*

Women Marching Around the World: We are Ready to Resist & Fight Back for our Rights

By Janine Solanki

On January 21, 2017, women, as well as their allies, began gathering in Washington DC for the Women's March on Washington. Anticipated numbers were quickly surpassed, as more and more tens of thousands of protesters arrived, equipped with signs and banners, and many bringing along their children to teach them to stand up for their rights even if they haven't yet learned to stand! Before long the plan to march in Washington was no longer possible as the number of protesters was so large, at over 1 million, that the entire march route was a sea of protesters. The call to join in protest against the anti-women policies of the newly inaugurated president Trump went far beyond Washington DC. While tweets and news media were reporting the scenes in Washington, before long images and videos were pouring in from across the US and around the world! Big name cities like London, Paris, Sydney, New Delhi, Mexico City and Buenos Aires held massive protests, but also some more unexpected locations took to the streets. The rural village of Sandy Cove, Nova Scotia (population 65) held a 15 women strong march, and researchers in Antarctica held a protest (complete with penguins) which brought the protests to 7 continents! At the end of a day of

marching, rallying and chanting, estimates take the numbers to 5 million protesters from 700 demonstrations world wide.

While many picket signs and demands at the Women's March were directed against Trump, women's oppression did not start with Trump and there is a lot more than one man that stands in the way of women's liberation. However Trump's brazen disregard for women's rights and the fact that a man at the highest position of power in United States is threatening the hard fought gains women have made was a catalyst to bring women, and men as their allies, to their feet and to the streets. What really brought women to the streets is lifetimes and countless generations of inequality, sexual violence, domestic abuse and exploitation.

Here in Vancouver, Canada over 15,000 women took to the streets in protest. The atmosphere was charged with energy as more and more people arrived in Downtown Vancouver, raising their picket signs and voices for a march through the streets. The steady drumming of Indigenous elders led the march, and chants of "Women's rights, under attack, what do we do? Stand up

fight back!" rang through the air. Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) participated in full force to support the march, with a banner held high demanding

"Women of the World Unite Against War and Occupation!" and picket signs that went out throughout the crowd with the demands "Resist Trump! Resist War! Resist Islamophobia! Resist Racism! Resist Sexism! Resist All Oppression!" MAWO's participation in the march and informational table at the rally following the march brought attention to Trump's destructive war-mongering policies and the long-standing effects of imperialist war and occupation. The new era of war and occupation that has been attacking country after country for the last 16 years, from Afghanistan and Iraq to Libya, Syria, Yemen and beyond, and it is women who suffer the most under these wars and occupations.

Women in imperialist countries have the responsibility to fight against the wars effecting our sisters, and brothers, at the hands of the governments who claim to represent us. These governments certainly don't represent us when they are sending their bombs abroad, nor do they represent women here at home where the struggle for equality and women's rights still have a long way to go.

Women in North America know inequality all too well, when they come home at the end of a day at work earning less than men. In the US the wage gap is an average \$0.79 to every \$1 earned by men, as calculated by the US Census Bureau in 2014. In Canada the gap is widening. In 2009 women earned on average 74.4% of what men earned, yet currently women earn 72% of what men earn, according to a 2016 report by Oxfam Canada and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Children are also facing the effects of this inequality, as 21% of single mothers in Canada raise their children while



living in poverty, compared to 7% of single fathers. In the province of British Columbia, which has some of the worst child poverty rates nationwide, one out of five children are living in poverty.

While the advancement of women in society and the workplace largely depends on a women's reproductive rights, in Canada and the US this is still heavily limited and often is another cost women have to pay. While women are tasked with the burden of preventing pregnancies, in this day and age they have a wide array of options in terms of contraceptives... right? Paying for them is another matter. Most extended health care plans in Canada do not cover contraceptives, or only cover oral contraceptives (the pill). So if as a women you want to take birth control in the form of a shot, a patch or other method, or even non-hormonal birth control such as the copper IUD, this is coming out of your own pocket. Even more enraging is the reason why only oral contraceptive is sometimes covered - it is due to the fact it can be used for non-contraceptive related health issues, and it's use for birth control is only due to this loop hole.

One of the biggest battles women face in North America and worldwide is the right to choose. In Canada although women have had the right to free abortions since 1988 after a long and hard struggle, access is another matter. Many areas of Canada do not have nearby abortion providers, and Prince Edward Island (PEI) does not have an in-province provider at all. In some provinces there are lengthy approval processes, restrictions on the type of abortion, wait lists, and differing gestational limits. In the US abortion is also legal but it is under constant threat and also diminished by access. New restrictions are constantly causing abortion providers to have to close their doors, and many states restrict insurers from covering the cost of an abortion.

Here at home and abroad, our sisters are being subjected to sexual assault, rape and domestic abuse. The statistics are staggering, but for most women it comes as no surprise that 1 in 4 women in North American will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime. In every statistic on sexual assault, it must

be considered that of every 100 incidents of sexual assault in Canada, only 6 are reported to the police. Often this is domestic abuse, and world wide up to 70% of women experience physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lives.

Despite these horrific figures, in the US, Trump is considering cutting funding for Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grants. As it stands, funding for domestic violence programs in the US is already insufficient. In 2015 the National Network to End Domestic Violence reported 12,000 inquiries for domestic violence services that could not be fulfilled due to a lack of resources, meaning women could not access vital resources such as attaining safe shelter, legal services, transportation assistance and childcare.

It is with the weight of all these injustices,

Women's March in Seattle, USA



Women's March in Mexico City, Mexico



Women's March in Accra, Ghana



Women's March in Vancouver, Canada



Women's March in New York, USA



and many more that this short article couldn't contain, that women around the world were united in protest on January 21st. Women

know that all the rights they currently have, from reproductive rights to the right to vote and work, are hard fought for rights and in many parts of the world are still being fought for. We are eternally indebted to the long and arduous struggles

by the women who came before us. However we cannot take these gains for granted - we must fight tooth and nail to maintain and extend these rights as they are constantly under threat.

We must take pride in our numbers and our unity on January 21st, but not sit back on it. January 21st is only a starting point, a boost to propel us forward. Women as a movement is a force that can bring about change in this world not only for the betterment of women but for our world as a whole. It is not only in the arena of women's rights that women must be active, but in making every place a women's place. A women's place is in the fight against war and occupation, against environmental degradation and in labour struggles, in science, sport, art and politics. With unity, action and organization the women of this world must step forward as a movement, and turn this world into a better and more just place.

*Follow Janine Solanki on Twitter:
@janinesolanki*

In Loving Memory of Indigenous Warrior Arthur Manuel 1951-2017



This section of Fire This Time Newspaper "In Loving Memory of Indigenous Warrior Arthur Manuel" includes a statement by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs on his passing and an interview by Aaron Mercredi of Fire This Time in 2005.

Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs With sadness we pass on to you UBCIC's statement regarding the passing of our friend Arthur Manuel January 12, 2017

(Coast Salish Territory / Vancouver, BC) Members of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs are deeply and profoundly saddened to hear of the sudden and unexpected passing of Arthur Manuel.

On behalf of our Elders, Leaders and Chiefs, we offer our sincere sympathies and condolences to the Manuel family with respect to their tremendous loss.

Arthur served for many years as Chief of the Neskonlith Indian Band, Chair of the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council and Leader and Spokesperson for the Interior Alliance. He was a member of the UBCIC's Chief Council. Most importantly, he was a good father and a wonderful grandfather who was devoted to them all, spending as much time with them as he could.

Arthur Manuel was, without question, one of Canada's strongest and most outspoken Indigenous Leaders in the defense of our Indigenous Land and Human Rights. He travelled extensively throughout Canada,

North America and around the world in his unwavering and relentless efforts to champion the cause of our Indigenous Rights. He relentlessly worked on land claim issues, calling for change to Canada's fundamental flawed policy on Indigenous land claims.

At this terribly sad moment in our history, we would like to thank the Manuel family for sharing Arthur with us for all these years.

We are so profoundly grateful for Arthur's many sacrifices and contributions to our ongoing struggles to seek a full measure of Justice for our Indigenous Peoples.

Arthur's legacy will continue to reverberate throughout our ongoing Indigenous history for many, many generations to come.

Media inquiries:

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip,

Union of BC Indian Chiefs: (604) 684-0231

Online at:

http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/arthurmanuel_legacy

"This Address of Poverty is Just Really a Scam"

An Interview with Arthur Manuel

By Aaron Mercredi

Fire This Time: To start off, could you tell me who you are and where you're from?

Art Manuel: I'm Arthur Manuel, and I'm from the Neskonlith Indian Reserve in the

Secwepemc Nation near Chase, BC, Canada. I'm also spokesperson for the Indigenous Network on Economy and Trade, but here I was involved in being the spokesman for the Grassroots People's Coalition. We were organizing in response to the First Minister's conference here in Kelowna during the 24th and 25th of November 2005.

FTT: What do you think is the significance of the meeting that was held between the First Ministers, Paul Martin, and some of the

major Aboriginal organizations in Canada?

AM: I think the main significance of it was that the Canadian government has been able to basically co-opt our national Aboriginal organizations into a strategy to deal with the symptoms of poverty as opposed to trying to deal with the cause of our poverty. Indigenous people at the grassroots level, especially the ones who have gathered here in Kelowna, have always been struggling with the federal and provincial governments with regards to Aboriginal title and Aboriginal fishery rights. And we've always been demanding the government recognize Aboriginal treaty rights, but that is not being done.

And with this agenda that they've sort of adopted across the street, what they've done is they've basically gotten the Indian/Aboriginal organizations to abandon Aboriginal treaty rights too and instead focus on social programs like education, health, and housing, and economic development. And they're going to use that signed-on agenda against the people who are struggling to have rights recognized and dealt with, because what they're going to do is they're going to do how Sun Peaks does by charging people with trespassing, or they are going to charge people for fishing without a permit, or fishing during a closed period or something, what they call 'closed.' The things which in those cases, they are asserting their authority over us and they are trying to say that we are breaking their rules, whether they use the Land Act or the Fishing Act, and when we go to court the government prosecutors use agreements like this ten-year agreement and other agreements, any kind of sweetheart deal that they've got with Indian people.

They use them to say "OK, the good Indians, the responsible Indians. They signed this real good agreement about housing, education, health and economic development. That's what the good Indians want to do." And they look at the youth, especially a lot of the youth and elders, and they're going to say, "Oh you're bad Indians so we're going to send you to jail for 45 days to smarten you up." And so that's how those agreements actually bite back on people. You sort of somehow think that they are going to help, but they are actually really dangerous, especially the way they use these agreements. And it shows they are basically managing Indian people. But, I have no confidence in them because in the end, 10 years from now, they're probably going to spend another \$5 billion, and it's not going to make a hell of a difference to us, simply because poverty is still going to be there because you're not getting to the root.

The root cause is non recognition of Aboriginal treaty rights. The minute they recognize Aboriginal rights here, that means that the Okanagan own the property underneath this building and are entitled to revenue because it's raised as a consequence, the use of this building for their commercial purposes. So that is not there now. It's just not there. They are not going to provide that kind of dialogue to address poverty from that perspective. You

know, the real thing that needs to be fixed isn't Indian people vis a vis health, education and housing. The real thing that needs to be fixed in this country is the Canadian economic system, because the Canadian economic system isn't based on recognizing Aboriginal treaty rights. It means that the entrepreneurs and government can just basically steal the land from us, from underneath our feet. That isn't possible in other countries. The Chinese have been buying and selling land for centuries, the Europeans have been doing it for centuries too, buying and selling land. They have to deal with the real cost of a ski resort. Sun Peaks didn't even steal it from the Shuswap. Get a couple of Shuswap chiefs to agree with it and it's actually a real fraudulent form of capitalism because it is based upon non-recognition of the primary land interests that the industry and government are using.

FTT: *We read about how good this deal is going to be for Native people in this country in the major media. How do you think Indigenous people are really going to be affected by this new 10-year agreement?*

AM: The one that doesn't recognize fundamental rights recognized under the constitution and recognized under the courts. That's the problem and that's the thing that needs fixing. Not us. So, we're going to assume the blame for that. And we're going to run around and try to have programs and that kind of thing, but the problem with that process is that they look at the federal and provincial government as having mutually exclusive jurisdiction on all money and all programs. So, we're outside still, looking at those two governments and that's the dialogue that the meeting is going to be like because the money is going to come from those guys. And through that money, they are going to be manipulated in the direction of an agenda.

They are going to be co-opted, and they're [the government] still going to wind up with the exclusive jurisdiction at the end of the day. In terms of Indian education, take a look at it. They're not really talking about Indian control of Indian education with a separate resource base. They're looking at recognizing the provincial government as having the primary constitutional responsibility. And what the feds want to do is suck the province into it so there is some shared responsibility there, you know, because if you study the background of social programs in this country, the federal government takes the position that they have no obligation to provide any of these services like healthcare, education, and housing. They feel that they don't have any obligation to do that on an Indian reserve. They feel that it is the provincial government's responsibility. They feel that the post secondary education, they are providing that as a humanitarian and moral obligation and not as a legal responsibility.

The provinces on the other hand, say "no, we don't have any legal responsibility for providing those services because they're services provided for Indians and under the constitution they are responsible for Indians, and so you guys will be handling it. So the thing is that both of them deny any responsibility. That's why we're

as poor as we are. That's the consequence. When two governments deny any liability or responsibility for something, obviously you're going to suffer the consequences. And that's what's happening right now. In fact, I feel that because of the sort of very uncertain area of who has authority with regards to programs, we need to claim that jurisdiction because it is ours. Reading under Section 35 (1), where we talk about self-government. We have a right; therefore the right is to do the things that we need to do to get money through the use of the land through the federal and provincial governments. When they use any of our land, they owe us. No 'ands,' 'ifs' or 'buts' about it are a part of that. So the thing is that that is what we need to get on our side. That's a direction that I see that we have to take. What's going on over there is a real travesty.

FTT: *It has been inspiring seeing grassroots people come together. Just the fact that there have been meetings over the past couple days countering what's going on over there and people coming from around to discuss these issues. What do you think is the next step?*

AM: Well the next step, like I told these people, is to maintain solidarity amongst ourselves, and build the coalition between our different groups. Because our different groups are really are actually active. You know, we have to pull together here. In these other areas, there are activists who I know from our ongoing work under INET and other things. When I hear action happening out there, I'm always out there trying to meet the people and to talk to them. But after making that contact what we need to do is to get together and start consolidating our own coalition, ongoing coalition that will support what our rights are as Indigenous people, as grassroots people. We can't depend on those guys. I hate to say this, but they're kind of addicted to federal funding. Like, we've had problems in our communities with drugs and alcoholism. We've attended healing societies, and there are different views. On my reserve, alcoholism is really there, and we've really changed our position, but things like dependency, anyone with a dependency, whether it is on drugs or on federal funding for political purposes, I think we need to seriously

question it.

The issues that are so critical now, are the land issues. That conference over there happened because the province and the federal government are scared. That's why it's happening. It's because the legal rights that we have been acquiring and accumulating over the centuries are being heard reporters and media in New York, and people who validate Canada's credit rating. They know that Indian people are a substantially high hidden cost that Canada has been hiding. The other doctrine you need to put in this perspective, and this gets really complicated, is the financial statements of Canada with reference of Aboriginal liabilities with regard to Indian land and treaty rights. And also the province, the same thing, the financial statements. We're actually in page 60 of the BC financial statements under what they call 'contingency modes and liabilities' and they sort of highlight the whole thing about Canada's BC treaty process in there in about four or five paragraphs. They highlight it. They have to highlight it because they need to let the people who lend BC money, the international investment banks, they need to let them know what all their liabilities are, and we are one of them as Indigenous people, and we have to tell them.

In this agreement, we'll end up in their next financial statement saying we got this thing, because what they need to show to the financial investment banks out there is that 'we've got the Indians under control. We're managing them.' I know that in their present statements, they say that 'we're lending them money to negotiate, and two-thirds of them are negotiating, but we don't expect an agreement in the foreseeable future.' They say that right in their financial statements, you know what I mean? The reason they do that is because they are using our land as collateral to borrow the money that they turn around and give us the \$100 million, which is real chump change when you talk about the deficit of some of these companies. General Motors runs a \$4 billion deficit on its GM plant in Canada. It's nickel and dime when you really nail it down to corporate interests, and here is our leadership thinking it will mean big change. It ain't going to help nobody.



Arthur Manuel, left, joined the Standing Rock Sioux encampment against the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016 with his daughter Kanabus Manuel, right.

Trump Presidency and the New Expansion of Israeli Settlements:

A Little Help From my Friend

By Noah Fine

Trump and Netanyahu, A Kindred Spirits

To those shocked at the seemingly endless flow of ridiculous political entertainment provided by US President Donald Trump and his team, it's important to remember that the Trump style of politics is nothing new. In fact it has been the base of Israeli and especially Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policy since before Trump was a political force.

It's no wonder that the two have become a pair of kindred spirits since Trump was elected. The two seem to please themselves in egging each other on towards the most treacherous of policies at the expense of the poor and oppressed of the world.

On December 23, 2016 during Obama's last stretch as president, his government abstained on a UN resolution calling for Israel to halt its illegal expansion of settlements into the West Bank of Palestine, allowing the resolution to pass. This was the only resolution condemning Israel to have passed at the UN during Obama's presidency. In comparison successive US presidents both Democrat and Republican had on many occasions allowed almost identical resolutions to pass. Obama also signed the friendliest aid package to Israel in U.S. history allocating \$38 billion in U.S. taxpayers' money to the Israeli military over the next 10 years. Regardless of the fact that by the numbers Obama's government was the friendliest to Israel since the illegal

establishment of the Israeli State, Netanyahu and Trump used the occasion of the UN vote to set the precedent for the upcoming period of US-Israeli relations under a Trump administration.

Settlements on the Rise

Since the establishment of the State of Israel on occupied Palestine and its acceptance as a member state of the UN, Israel has been bound, even if only symbolically to international law. The UN partition plan for Palestine adopted in 1947 allocated two sections of land for the creation of a Palestinian State alongside Israel. The two areas known as the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) to the North-East and the Gaza Strip to the South-West of what was once the land of Palestine were to be preserved. However despite dozens of condemnations which have been passed by both the UN general membership and Security Council, Israel has continued expanding illegal settlements into the Palestinian territory of the West Bank. Today illegal Israeli settlers in the West Bank have reached well over half a million people. The statistics are difficult to obtain as there are both authorized and non-authorized settlements in the West Bank.

Despite at least 11 UN resolutions condemning Israeli expansion into the West Bank dating from 1967-2017, Israel has continued relatively unfettered in its pursuit of the illegal colonization of the West Bank.

It had become a norm in US government statements to condemn the expansion of these settlements in favour of the UN resolutions and a two-state solution for the Palestinian problem. However, regardless of these statements Israel continued to build and the US government continued to send billions of dollars of aid to support them. After the most recent UN resolution in December of last year



Israeli soldier stands by Trump campaign poster near West Bank Jewish Settlement of Ariel. October 6, 2016

Obama's Secretary of State John Kerry re-affirmed the traditional US position on the settlements when he stated "... if there is only one state, you would have millions of Palestinians permanently living in segregated enclaves in the middle of the West Bank..." On January 24th, 2017 Trump's press secretary Sean Spicer when asked about expanding Israeli settlements simply said, "We're going to have a meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu and we'll continue to discuss that... Israel continues to be a huge ally of the United States, he wants to grow closer with Israel, to make sure that it gets the full respect that it deserves in the Middle East." Spicer's statement was void of any even theatrical criticism of Israel unlike previous US administrations.

On Tuesday January 31st, the government of Israel announced plans to build another 3,000 settler homes in the West Bank, while at the same time Trump is "doing very detailed studies," as he told the Christian Broadcasting Network, on moving the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem "in the not-too-distant future." At the moment all foreign diplomatic missions in Israel are based in Tel Aviv. East Jerusalem as per the UN partition plan is designated to be the Palestinian capital. Netanyahu has been insisting for years that the U.S. move its' embassy to Jerusalem, a very controversial move that would entrench the Israeli plan to completely annex Palestinian territory and undermine UN and international law.

If the signs so far that Trump will support this more audacious Israel are correct, it seems the future will hold many more devastating affects for Palestinian people. In fact the Washington Post has just revealed that Trump himself has donated financially to support illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. With a friendlier US President towards Israel, an unchained and unfettered Israel could have grave consequences on the Palestinian people.



Palestinian woman confronts Israeli border police at protest against Israeli settlements in West Bank village of Nabi Saleh. Sept. 2016

Walls & Bridges

When President Trump implemented the Muslim Ban and continued his rhetoric on the proposed Mexico border wall, Israeli PM Netanyahu had some words of wisdom for Trump as he himself is a professional in such fields. On January 28th, 2017 Netanyahu tweeted, "President Trump is right. I built a wall along Israel's southern border. It stopped all illegal immigration. Great success. Great idea." Actually Netanyahu has two walls. One sits on its' border with Egypt to deter African migrants fleeing the devastation of various African countries as well as the Apartheid Wall which snakes through the West Bank making a Palestinian state impossible and movement of Palestinians within equally difficult. Shortly after Netanyahu's tweet, Mexico's Foreign Ministry responded outlining its', "profound astonishment, rejection and disappointment... Mexico is a friend of Israel and should be treated as such by its Prime Minister." Israeli Foreign Ministry Spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon tweeted to the Mexican government to try to smooth things over claiming that PM Netanyahu, "referred to our specific security experience which we are willing to share. We do not express a position on US-Mexico relations."

Occupation is the Problem, A United Palestine is the Solution!

Regardless of where things go from here between Trump and Netanyahu, the reality is that the further colonization of Palestine is their united goal. Through the expansion of settlements, expansion of the apartheid wall, bi-annual bombing campaigns against the Palestinian Gaza Strip, Israel has proven for almost 70 years that the "Two-

State" solution is not in their interest or desire.

Although Obama and previous US administrations ignored the fact, Netanyahu has always made clear his intentions against a Palestinian state. During the Israeli elections of 2015, which re-elected Netanyahu, the Prime Minister argued in an interview, "Whoever moves to establish a Palestinian state or intends to withdraw from territory is simply yielding territory for radical Islamic terrorist attacks against Israel." When the interviewer asked if that meant there would be no Palestinian State if he is elected, Netanyahu affirmed, "indeed."

While Trump's election may have emboldened the Israeli regime and may speed up the process of colonization and the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people, the struggle of Palestinian people and their many friends around the world must continue and strengthen. If Israel and the US have made it so clear that a "Two State" solution is not in their interest, then Palestinians and their friends must too make a clear and bold solution.

Trump presidency has indeed attempted to sew many divisions between people. However, regardless of their attempts people have come together to oppose the Trump regime and its' policies just as for 70 years people came together to oppose

Israeli forces demolish home of Hana al-Naqib in Lydd. February 11, 2015



the Israeli Zionist regime and its policies on both the Jewish and Palestinian sides.

The solution the people of Palestine and their Jewish sisters and brothers need is not a solution of division but one of unity. The state of Israel and its racist Zionist ideology have been the creator and enforcer of the Palestinian problem and division between the two peoples.

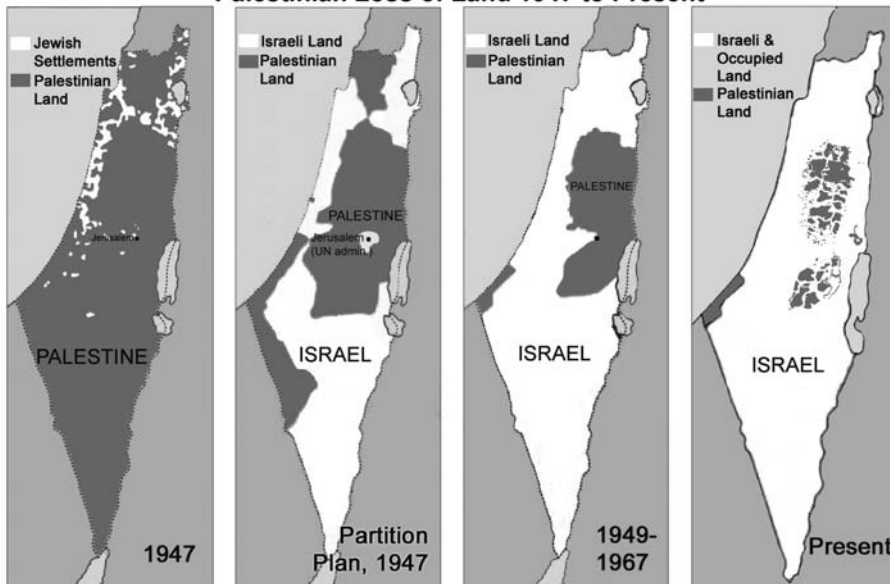
At Chicago O'Hare airport during mass protests against Trump's Muslim Ban, protestors brought down the Israeli flag at the airport and raised the Palestinian flag in its place as a show of solidarity with the struggle of Palestinians. Jews and Muslims stood together in protest of Trump's inhumane ban. Just hours after Trump implemented the ban the Victoria Islamic Centre in Texas was burned to the ground. Robert Loeb, president of the Jewish temple near by visited the Islamic centres founder and handed him the keys to the Jewish synagogue so their Muslim sister and brothers would have a place to worship. And examples like this are spreading.

Now is a time for coming together regardless of religion, ethnicity or any other human identity used to divide. Palestinian people and Jewish people could live together on the same land, under the same flag and united in a single state called Palestine. With the Right of Return granted to the more than 6 million Palestinian refugees living abroad who were cleansed from their land, each individual would be granted the right to vote and organize democratically, together a better future for all.

Instead of Israel being recorded in history as one of the great errors of humankind, perhaps Palestine could be recorded as one of the great achievements as a people coming together against the odds for a safer, cleaner, and better world that we all deserve and desperately need.

*Follow Noah Fine on Twitter:
@noahfine*

Palestinian Loss of Land 1947 to Present

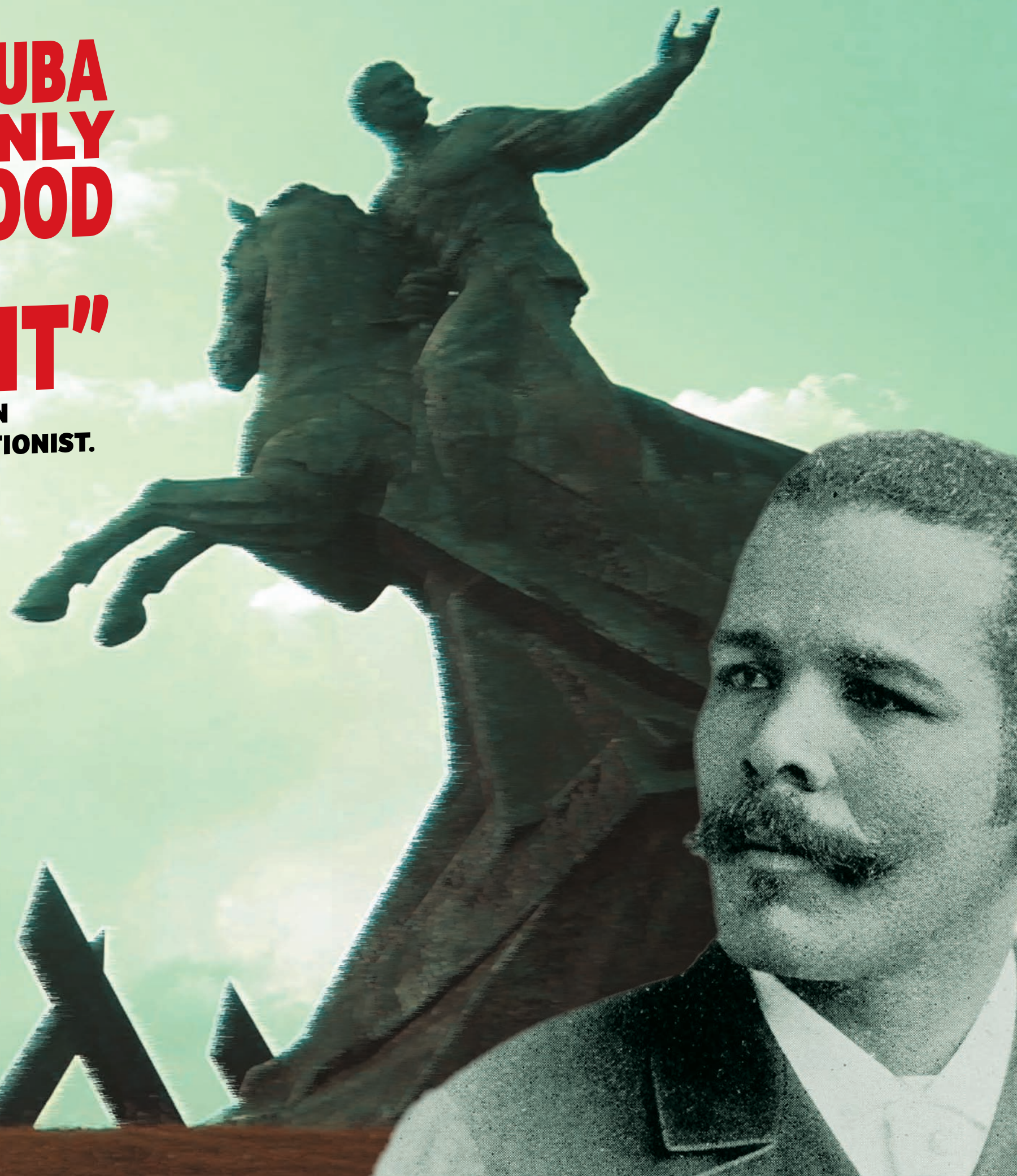


**"HE WHO TRIES TO TAKE CUBA
WILL TAKE ONLY
DUST DRENCHED IN BLOOD
IF HE DOES NOT
PERISH IN THE FIGHT"**

**ANTONIO
MACEO** SECOND-IN-COMMAND OF THE CUBAN
INDEPENDENCE ARMY. SLAVE ABOLITIONIST.
BLACK REVOLUTIONARY LEADER.

A.K.A. "BRONZE TITAN"
DIED IN BATTLE
1845-1896

FIRE THIS TIME CELEBRATES
**BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH**



Excerpt of speech delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King was given on April 4th 1967, precisely one year before Dr. King's assassination on April 4th 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. In this important speech Dr. King portrays the latest development of his political vision and gives a comprehensive analysis of US imperialist war drive in Indochina, specifically in Vietnam. Dr. King also connects the war the imperialist ruling class were conducting in Vietnam to the war against Afro-American and other oppressed people in the United States, like the restriction of democratic rights, poverty, and racism.

Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movement well and pray that our own inner being may be sensitive to its guidance, for we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.

Over the past two years, as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path. At the heart of their concerns this query has often loomed large and loud: Why are you speaking about war, Dr. King? Why are you joining the voices of dissent? Peace and civil rights don't mix, they say. Aren't you hurting the cause of your people, they ask? And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not

really known me, my commitment or my calling. Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live.

Strange Liberators

They must see Americans as strange liberators. The Vietnamese people proclaimed their own independence in 1945 after a combined French and Japanese occupation, and before the Communist revolution in China. They were led by Ho Chi Minh. Even though they quoted the American Declaration of Independence in their own document of freedom, we refused to recognize them. Instead, we decided to support France in its reconquest of her former colony.

Our government felt then that the Vietnamese people were not "ready" for independence, and we again fell victim to the deadly Western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so

us to see the enemy's point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition.

Protesting the War

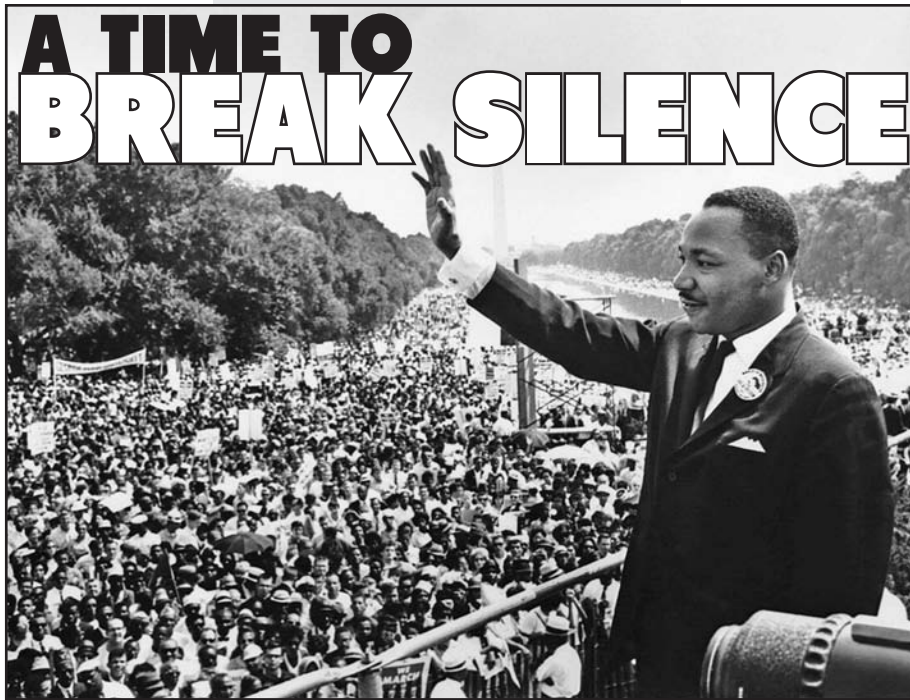
Meanwhile we in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must continue to raise our voices if our nation persists in its perverse ways in Vietnam. We must be prepared to match actions with words by seeking out every creative means of protest possible.

There is something seductively tempting about stopping there and sending us all off on what in some circles has become a popular crusade against the war in Vietnam. I say we must enter the struggle, but I wish

to go on now to say something even more disturbing. The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality we will find ourselves organizing clergy- and laymen-concerned committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching

for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and policy. Such thoughts take us beyond Vietnam, but not beyond our calling as sons of the living God.

I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a "thing-oriented" society to a "person-oriented" society. When machines



long. With that tragic decision we rejected a revolutionary government seeking self-determination, and a government that had been established not by China (for whom the Vietnamese have no great love) but by clearly indigenous forces that included some Communists. For the peasants this new government meant real land reform, one of the most important needs in their lives.

Here is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence when it helps



and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums

of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say: "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of Latin America and say: "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just. A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

The People Are Important

These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression and out of the wombs of a frail world new systems of justice and equality are being born. The shirtless and barefoot people of the land are rising up as never before. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light." We in the West must support these revolutions. It is a sad fact that, because of comfort, complacency, a morbid fear of communism, and our proneness to adjust to injustice, the Western nations that initiated so much of the revolutionary spirit of the modern world have now

"We must move past indecision to action"

become the arch anti-revolutionaries. This has driven many to feel that only Marxism has the revolutionary spirit. Therefore, communism is a judgment against our failure to make democracy real and follow through on the revolutions we initiated. Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores and thereby speed the day when "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain.

"A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual

societies.

Let us hope that this spirit will become the order of the day. We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate. As Arnold Toynbee says: "Love is the ultimate force that makes for the saving choice of life and good against the damning choice of death and evil. Therefore the first hope in our inventory must be the hope that love is going to have the last word."

We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity. The "tide in the affairs of men" does not remain at the flood; it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: "Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. "The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on..." We still have a choice today; nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation.

We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world -- a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter -- but beautiful -- struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men, and we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message, of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise we must choose in this crucial moment of human history.

WAR, OCCUPATION AT HOME & ABROAD



DIVIDE & RULE: TRUMP GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONALIZING ISLAMOPHOBIA & BIGOTRY

By Alison Bodine

On Friday, January 27, U.S. President Trump issued an executive order titled, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States." With this order, anyone from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria or Yemen was restricted from entering the United States for the next 90 days; while Syrian refugees are restricted indefinitely. The order also halts the entire U.S. refugee program for 120 days.

This cruel, racist and inflammatory order came into effect immediately, resulting in chaos and confusion in airports across the U.S., where hundreds of people with green-cards and valid Visas for entry were being harassed and detained because of their nationality. In the first 23 hours of the order, 109 people were denied entry to the U.S. and 173 were prevented from even getting on flights to the United States, according to U.S. Homeland Security. According to civil and human rights activists, the number of people affected in the first hours of the ban was much higher.

Almost immediately, the mass response of people on the streets in the United States as well as different levels of legal intervention, began to chip away at some of the most vile and inhuman parts of the order. People detained at the airports, which included children as young as five, were released and allowed to enter the U.S. Within a day of the order being issued, a Federal judge in New York ruled that those detained could not be deported,

granting an emergency stay on that part of Trump's order. In the following days, other judges, lawyers and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) grappled with the ban in the courts, and continue to do so to this day.

What Terrorist Threat?

Contrary to what President Trump and his administration would like people to believe, this executive order cannot be based on protecting people in the U.S. from "terrorism." Not a single person in the U.S. has been killed in a terrorist attack committed by someone from any of the seven countries on the list identified in the executive order. Looking at the last 40 years, if indeed the U.S. government wanted to protect people from terrorist attacks, they would have to ban people from some of their closest allies: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

This, however was not the case and once again, the threat of "terrorism" is exposed as a thinly veiled excuse for a crackdown on the democratic and civil rights of the entire population in the U.S. This time it is focused on immigrants and refugees from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

More Than a Muslim Ban

There are 57 countries in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, an international organization that brings together countries from around the world with a majority, or very significant, Muslim populations. Yet, only seven of these

countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen are included in the executive order. The question is, why these seven countries specifically?

In 2007, retired U.S. army general Wesley Clark appeared in an interview on Democracy Now! where he explained a Defense department memo that he had seen in 2003 as follows, "This is a memo that describes how we're going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran." It is no coincidence that six out of the seven countries included in the executive order are on this list.

With the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the U.S. government launched the new era of war and occupation that follows the path of this deadly roadmap. After 16 years, this period of never ending war, occupation, sanctions and western intervention has covered nearly every country included in that memo, and more. Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen have all been the target of U.S.-led bombing campaigns, drone strikes, military occupations, sanctions and other forms of imperialist overt and covert intervention.

In order to carry out this outright attack on people abroad, the U.S. government has had to demonize those that they are attacking. People in the United States must be led to believe that the people, and governments, of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen are the enemy. The executive order



is an extension of the fear-mongering that enables the U.S. to carry out their bloody scheme against people in the Middle East and North Africa with less opposition at home.

Refugee Crisis

The depravity of this fear campaign in the U.S. and Western countries is most apparent when it comes to their attack on refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, most of whom have been forced from their homes due to U.S.-led intervention in their countries. Although the attack on the basic rights and humanity of refugees has been escalating with the Trump's executive order, it began long before.

Today, there are more than 65 million refugees in the world, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). This means that one out of every 108 people on this planet is a refugee displaced from their home for reasons beyond their control. Tens of millions of these refugees are from the seven countries named in the executive order. The U.S. supported proxy war in Syria has created over 12 million refugees alone, 8 million of whom have been forced to flee their country in search of somewhere safe to be.

Over the last two years the refugee crisis, which has been isolated to the Middle East and Africa, has arrived on European shores. Over 1.3 million people have been forced to flee their homes, and then the region, in search of somewhere with a possibility for life. Over 16 years of constant U.S.-led wars, occupations and interventions in the Middle East and North Africa have not only taken away

peoples means for life, they have also taken away the hope that the violence and destruction will someday end. This horrible fact is illustrated clearly in the refugee arrivals to Europe in 2016 - over 40% of the refugees were from only three countries: Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq (UNHCR). This crisis for humanity, one that has driven so many people to risk their own lives and that of their families, is not over.



What about Refugees in Canada?

"To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada" – Justin Trudeau, Twitter, January 28, 2017

With these 140 characters, the Prime Minister of Canada boasted that Canada would provide a counter-balance to the racist, Islamophobic order of President Trump. People around the world responded enthusiastically to the hopeful and welcoming tweet, sharing it over 400,000 times on Twitter. These may be nice words, but how welcoming has the government of Canada actually been?

During the 2015 Federal Election, the

Liberal party announced that it would welcome 25,000 government-sponsored refugees to Canada by the end of December 2015. Over a year later and they still haven't fulfilled their promise. According to their own website, as of January 2, 2017, Canada has only "welcomed" 21,751 government-sponsored Syrian refugees; and 39,671 Syrian refugees overall.

And Canada's doors are closing, not opening, to Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Just weeks before Trudeau typed out his now famous tweet, the government of Canada actually capped the number of refugees that can be sponsored by community groups and "groups-of-five" to a thousand applications this year. As of January 25, 2017 that limit has been reached. This is significant not only because sponsoring refugees as community groups and "groups-of-five," was an accessible way for people in Canada to directly sponsor refugees, but also because refugees sponsored in this way were also not required to have United Nations (UN) proof of their status as refugees.

According to the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, a Government of Canada website, they have had to cap the number of refugees because the current wait times are too long. Surely, there are other ways to process the applications of desperate and vulnerable people, maybe it's time to hire more people to process the applications? The government of Canada says that there are now 45,000

people waiting to be resettled in Canada, whose applications are in process. The problem with putting caps on the number of applications accepted is that the refugee crisis is continuing to grow; less applications does not mean that there are now less refugees.

Canada's new Minister of Immigration, Ahmed Hussen, has also further clarified, "Our immigration levels plan has an allocation that is historically high for refugees," in other words – nothing is changing about Canada's refugee policy, even in the face of Trump's executive order. Overall the "government levels plan" Hussen refers to is actually a decrease in the number of refugees welcomed into Canada, from a total of 55,800 in 2016 to a total of 40,000 in

Institutionalization of Islamophobia

How is it possible for governments like the U.S. and Canada to get away with such backward immigration and refugee policies? Part of it is the same reason they are able to get away with carrying out their bloody wars in the Middle East and North Africa: fear-mongering and the propagation of Islamophobia.

Now, the U.S. travel and refugee ban has taking this campaign one step further, it has institutionalized Islamophobia in the United States. No matter how many people are challenging it in court today, there is now another layer of explicit immigration policy to back up the bigotry and violence that has been growing against Muslim people in the United States since the U.S. “war on terror” began after 9/11 and the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

This is not the first time in U.S. history that fear and hysteria have been used by the United States to keep people divided and unable to fight for their rights. Under both Democrats and Republicans, the U.S. government has used fear as a tool to control poor, working and oppressed people. Immigrants and refugees have often been the scapegoats for a whole host of economic and social crises in the U.S.

There are more than a few examples: The U.S. banned Chinese immigration with multiple pieces of legislation beginning in the 1880’s, at the same time restricting the rights of Chinese people already living in the United States. In 1921, after World War I, Congress restricted immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe. During World War II and the Holocaust, the President of the United States stated that refugees fleeing the Nazi’s were actually a threat to U.S. national security and entire boats of mostly Jewish refugees were turned back to Europe after reaching the United States. The list goes on to include the banning of people for their political beliefs and even their HIV status. The government of Canada is also no stranger to these same tactics.

Islamophobia is Growing

On Sunday, January 29, six people were murdered in a terrorist attack on Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec, a mosque in Quebec

City, Canada. The young man that has confessed to this atrocious crime has racist, anti-immigrant and Islamophobic views that have been whipped up through this fear campaign.

In the United States, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) has reported that, “In the one week since Donald Trump became President-elect, there has been a spike in bias incidents targeting minorities.” However, the spike in anti-Muslim hate crimes didn’t come only with the rise of Trump in to U.S. politics. A report from Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University - San Bernardino, showed that by 2015, crimes against Muslims had grown to levels higher than those following the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States. This represents a growth in attacks on the Muslim community, including arsons, murders, assaults, and other threats, by 67% between 2014 and 2015 (FBI statistics).

This growth in Islamophobic attacks has not arisen out of thin air. It is the direct result the fear-mongering of governments in the U.S., Canada and Europe. Whether it is a tweet by the Trump administration’s National Security Advisor, former Lt. General Michael Flynn who declared in February of 2016, “Fear of Muslims is RATIONAL: please forward this to others: the truth fears no questions,” or it is government legislation like Bill C-51 in Canada, the message is the same. Be afraid, be very afraid.

Now is the Time to Organize

No question about it, Trump’s executive

order is a racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic assault targeting Muslims and some of the world’s most vulnerable and devastated people. However, in reality, after the initial chaos and confusion, it may not be that this order concretely changes much about the already inhuman response of the United States to the complete destruction that they have caused in the Middle East and North Africa. The doors of the U.S. have been shut tight to immigrants and refugees from the region for a long time already.

However, Trump’s executive order has served a purpose well beyond inflicting further punishment upon the people of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and all those facing the brunt of U.S. state-sponsored terrorism

abroad. The more profound damage will be felt in the United States itself, as the fear-mongering and far-right rhetoric sets in for the long-term.

As poor, working and oppressed people in the United States and Canada, we have to confront both sides of this beast head-on. As the U.S. attempts to shut its doors, we demand that they immediately accept 500,000 refugees, still only a fraction of the lives that they have destroyed. Here in Canada, where the government has marched lock-step with the United States throughout the new era of war and occupation, we demand that the government of Canada immediately accept 200,000 refugees. All of these refugees must be granted their full human, democratic and legal rights.

We must unite the voices of poor and working people in the U.S., Canada and Europe for an end to the executive order and the travel and refugee ban in the United States. At the same time, if we are to put an end to Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism at home, we also have no choice but to demand an end to the wars, occupations, sanctions and U.S.-led interventions that have devastated the Middle East and Africa.

*Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter:
@Alisoncolette*





CCLA CALLS FOR CONCRETE ACTION FROM CANADIAN GOVERNMENT ON U.S. TRAVEL BAN

STATEMENT FROM THE CANADIAN CIVIL LIBERTIES ASSOCIATION

REGARDING IMPACT IN CANADA ON REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS OF THE JAN. 27 UNITED STATES EXECUTIVE ORDER ("PROTECTING THE NATION FROM TERRORIST ATTACKS BY FOREIGN NATIONALS")

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association deplores the Executive Order ("Protecting the Nation from Terrorist Attacks by Foreign Nationals") issued by United States President Donald Trump on Jan. 27, 2017, because of its impact on permanent residents, dual citizens, U.S. green card holders, and refugees fleeing persecution and seeking asylum in Canada.

We commend our political leaders, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and those provincial and municipal leaders, who reiterated that Canada's doors are open to individuals fleeing persecution, terror, and war.

Refugees are individuals fleeing persecution who have no state to protect them, and Canada has undertaken binding legal obligations both in the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and in Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Although a number of U.S. courts granted stays to temporarily prevent deportations (although not detentions) under the Executive Order, the fight is not over yet.

Going forward, CCLA's concerns focus on identifying and implementing concrete steps to protect Canadian dual citizens, permanent residents, refugees and asylum seekers.

CCLA calls on Canada to take the following steps to honour its constitutional, legal and international law obligations immediately:

1- Suspend the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement. The CCLA does not consider the US at this current time to be a 'safe third country' within the meaning of the agreement.

2- Put in place procedures to process

applications from asylum seekers affected by the ban, who wish to seek refuge in Canada. Refugees and refugee applicants from countries affected by the Executive Order, including those currently in the United States, are extremely vulnerable. Canada can and should protect them.

3- Increase the number of refugees accepted by Canada in 2017, in to accommodate individuals from those countries currently affected by the U.S. ban: Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Iran. Canada must, without delay, raise or eliminate the cap recently imposed on privately-sponsored refugees from Iraq and Syria, and reinstate the policy allowing individuals from those countries to be considered for sponsorship without a UNHCR refugee certificate or equivalent.

4- Ensure that Canadian airlines and other commercial enterprises do not collude with a foreign domestic order — and refuse boarding passes to immigrants, dual citizens, refugees and asylum seekers — that discriminates on the basis of country of origin, ethnic origin, or religious belief. Doing so violates Canada's legal obligations set out in Canada's constitution, domestic laws, and international law binding upon Canada. Commercial enterprise cannot be a justification to engage in violation of law and humanitarian commitments.

5- Ensure clear guidelines are provided by Canada and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to all consular officials to assist any Canadians from the U.S. ban-listed countries who are overseas and find themselves stranded, detained, or otherwise prevented from returning to Canada. These guidelines must comply with the recommendations of The Federal Commission of Inquiry into the Actions of Canadian Officials in Relation to Maher Arar and the Internal Inquiry into the Actions of Canadian Officials in Relation to Abdullah Almalki, Ahmad Abou-Elmaati and Muayyed Nureddin. Canada must provide emergency consular assistance to any dual citizens who have experienced difficulties as

a result of the ban.

6- Canada must immediately review the impact of our information sharing agreements with the United States, including, but not limited to the Security Canada Information Sharing Act introduced by Bill C-51 (Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015); the information sharing agreements pursuant to the Canada-U.S. Security Perimeter Agreement; and the particular impact of Canadian national security agencies including the Canadian Border Security Agency sharing information with U.S. agencies. Canada cannot enable discrimination based on country of origin, ethnic origin, or religious beliefs. Canada must ensure that innocent persons are not put at risk by information provided by Canada. Canada must use this opportunity to set clear limits on information shared with the United States.

7- Canada must immediately review the implementation of the U.S. International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITARs), which has been used on several occasions by Canadian companies to unlawfully discriminate against individuals lawfully in Canada on the basis of their country of origin or contacts to a foreign country (for example, for example in (Quebec (Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse. Bombardier Aerospace Training Center); and

8- Provide immediate assistance for any individuals who may be stranded at Canadian airports, bus, and train stations as a result of the ban, including those who anticipate being denied entry on arrival to the United States and those who have been turned away by U.S. Customs and Border Protection preclearance.

The CCLA offers its full and unequivocal support for the rights of refugees, immigrants, and dual citizens. If you know of anyone affected by the U.S. Executive Order in Canada, call us so we can help. Where necessary we are able to enlist the aid of our network of top-notch pro bono lawyers and/or provide referrals to legal resources.

www.CCLA.org

FIDEL, CUBA, AFRICA & PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT



By Tamara Hansen

To kick off Black History Month the African Descent Society BC organized a daylong "Forum on People African Descent". The day featured a walking tour of the historic black neighbourhood of Hogan's Alley, followed by art, music, food, speakers and discussion at the Orpheum Annex. Tamara Hansen, Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and author of the book "Five Decades of the Cuban Revolution the Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership" (Battle of Ideas Press, 2010) was invited to speak about "Comandante Fidel Castro, Cuba, Africa & People of African Descent". Printed here are an edited version of her remarks

Comandante Fidel

On Friday November 25th at 10:29pm, most of you will know that the historic leader of the Cuban revolution, Comandante Fidel Castro, passed away. He was 90 years old. I believe that Fidel leaves behind an incredibly important legacy that says something about our capacity to work together as human beings, no matter our race, gender, religion or sexual

orientation, to build a better world. This is what I want to talk about today.

Since his passing response throughout the world has been deeply divided about Fidel's legacy: was he a visionary revolutionary who fought for a better world or a cruel communist dictator?

I should be very clear that I am very biased on this issue and I believe that Fidel was a very important revolutionary leader and I will be talking today mostly about his role in Cuba, Africa and with people of African descent.

The Cuban revolution

Cuba has had many leaders and heroes, as our Emcee Peter mentioned, of African descent throughout its history. One of the most important was Antonio Maceo, they called him the Bronze Titan because of his skin colour. He was a very important leader in the 1800s against Spanish colonialism in Cuba and also against slavery. But the more recent Cuban revolution in 1959, also had many afro-Cuban involved in its leadership, from Juan Almeida, to Victor Dreke, to Harry Villegas.

I want to begin by explaining some of the gains that the Cuban revolution made for Afro-Cubans. As I read this quote, I want you to think about the situation in Canada and the United States for people of African descent in 1959. These were times of slowly moving towards bigger social

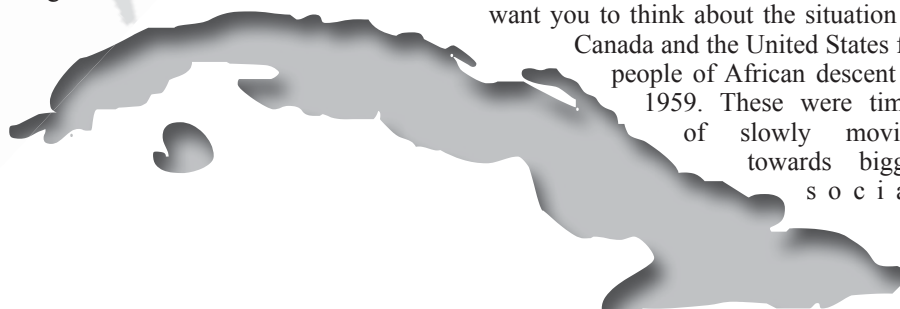
justice movements, there was the very active civil rights movement and think about all of the struggle people were facing in the U.S. and Canada. In Cuba it was a time of revolution, the quote I am going to read will describe some of the initial moves made by the revolutionary forces as they came to power after 1959. This is from Naomi Glassman from the Council on Hemispheric Affairs wrote an article in 2011 about race relations in

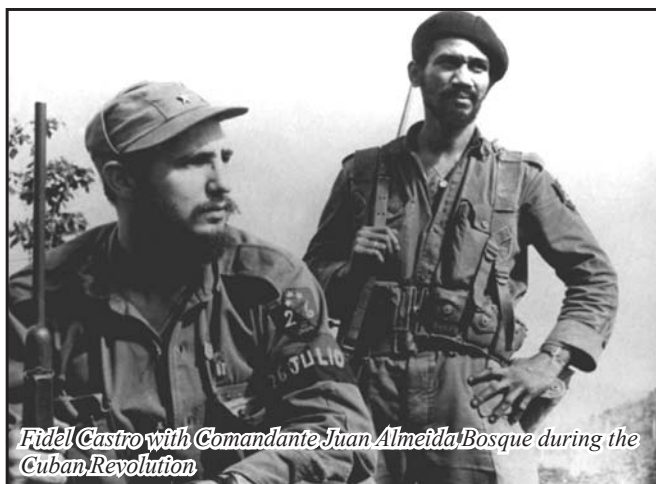
Cuba. "When Castro first came to power in Cuba, the Afro-Cuban population was disproportionately poor and

marginalized, lacking sufficient medical care, social services and educational opportunities. Castro believed that such overt racism was in direct conflict with his commitment to social justice and equality and passed policies to desegregate beaches, parks, work sites



Tamara Hansen speaking on Fidel, Cuba and Africa



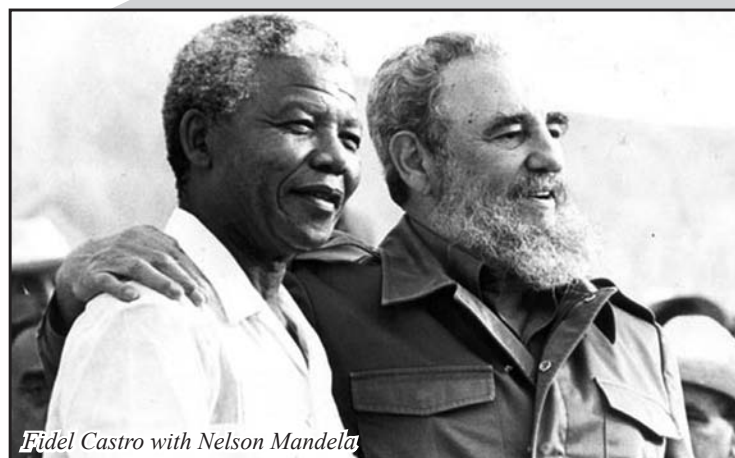


Fidel Castro with Comandante Juan Almeida Bosque during the Cuban Revolution

and social clubs. He outlawed all forms of legal and overt discrimination, including discrimination in employment and education. Castro also worked to increase the number of Afro-Cuban political representatives, with the percentage of Black members on the Council of State expanding from 12.9% in 1976 to 25.8% by 2003.” So these are some of the initial gains that the Cuban revolution made for people of African descent, but this drive was not limited to the Afro-Cubans living in Cuba. A big part of the Cuban revolution was not just about changing Cuban society to be just and equal for all, but also was about revolutionary internationalism. This was the idea of supporting people of other countries who also wanted to fight for a better world in their own lands.

Che Guevara in the Congo

In 1965, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, the renowned Argentinian-born leader of the Cuban revolution, went in disguise to Africa, with the support of the Cuban government. He went to the Congo to fight imperialism and promote Cuba’s Revolutionary Internationalist ideals.



Fidel Castro with Nelson Mandela

he told me about his experience working with Che Guevara.

So this man is from Trinidad and I sat down with him and I had a chance to sit with him and discuss his memories of being with Che in the Congo. He was very young and an inexperienced soldier. He was part of his community militia, but was not formally trained, and

was surprised when he was chosen for this mission. Basically Cuba had decided to send as many people of African descent in order to not stand out in the jungles of the Congo.

However, the famous anti-colonial leader Amílcar Cabral from Guinea-Bissau said about Cuban fighters: “[They] are ready to lay down their lives for the liberation of our countries, and in exchange for this aid to our freedom and the progress of

So he went in 1965, in the midst of rebel uprisings, with a group of mostly Afro-Cuban soldiers, who arrived first and began training their Congolese co-fighters in the tactics that had been so successful in Cuba. I was very lucky in 2005 on my first trip to Cuba, I had the chance to meet with a man who went to fight with Che in the Congo. I wanted to briefly relay a story

our people, all they take from us are their comrades who fell fighting for freedom.” This is in contrast to colonial and imperial powers who went to Africa with many promises, but who have always taken a million times more from Africa than they have given.

Comandante Fidel, Angola, Cuito Cuanavale & South African Apartheid

So next I want to talk about Comandante Fidel, Angola, Cuito Cuanavale & South African Apartheid. First, in 1975, Cuba sent 30,000 soldiers to Angola to help with their fight for independence against colonial powers. They had a small victory against the South African apartheid army, and wanted to push forward, but due to the geopolitical situation at that time, Cuba had pressure from the Soviet Union



Fidel Castro and Malcolm X meet in Harlem's Theresa Hotel on September 24, 1960

to withdraw and they did.

However, they were called on by Angola again in 1987, and this time Cuba decided to carve its own path despite Soviet objections and to go help the people of Angola. So Fidel later explained, “[the South African army] advanced strongly towards Cuito Cuanavale, an old NATO airbase. Here it prepared to deliver a mortal blow against Angola. Desperate calls were received from the Angolan government appealing to the Cuban troops for support in fending off presumed disaster; it was unquestionably the biggest threat from a military operation in which we, as on other occasions, had no responsibility whatever.” Despite the fact that it was not Cuba’s responsibility to defend Angola’s sovereignty, Fidel sent 55,000 soldiers to Angola. He remained in Cuba, spending days and nights strategizing the



Che Guevara in Congo, 1965

battle in Angola. In the end, Cuba and the people of Angola won the battle at Cuito Cuanavale. This weakened the South African Apartheid army severely. To the extent that in 1995 Nelson Mandela of Cuba and the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, “the defeat of the racist army at Cuito Cuanavale has made it possible for me to be here today.” Meaning that Nelson Mandela believed that he never would have been released from prison and that he would not have become President of South Africa, without the battle that Cuba and Angola fought together in 1987.

Nelson Mandela said many beautiful things about Fidel. So I wanted to share two quotes with you. He said in Cuba in 1991, “The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of Africa. The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom, and justice, unparalleled for its principled and selfless character. From its earliest days the Cuban revolution has itself been a source of inspiration to all freedom-loving people.”

Then in 1995 Nelson Mandela was reflecting on his previous trip to Cuba. He said, “I went to Cuba in July 1991, and I drove through the streets with

Fidel Castro. There were a great deal of cheers. And I also waved back believing that these cheers were for me...But when I reached the square where I had to make some remarks to the crowd, then I realized that these cheers were not meant for me, they were meant for Fidel Castro...Then I realized that here was a man of the masses...Those are the impressions I have about Fidel Castro in Cuba.”

Such a humble leader, Mandela was often criticized for his friendship with Fidel, who as we know has played a very controversial role in international politics. Nelson Mandela also commented on this a few times saying, “we are now being advised about Cuba by people who have supported the apartheid regime these last 40 years. [...] No honorable man or woman could ever accept advice from people who never cared for us at the most difficult times.” So this is a lifelong friendship between Fidel and Nelson Mandela and between Fidel and the people of Africa. This has been reflected on by many different authors from all over

the world, especially all over Africa since Fidel’s passing in November.

In Cuba Today

So what is the situation of people of African descent in Cuba today? People of African descent make up between 40 and 60% of Cuba’s population, defined

as black or mixed-race. In February 2013, Cuba held its last parliamentary elections. There were 612 seats open in those elections:

- 48.9% went to women

- The average age of delegates in Cuba’s

parliament is 48.

- 37% of the 612 seats were won by either black or mixed-race Cubans.

This is a pretty big percentage for Cuba. However, not as high as they would like. If you talk to any Cubans they will tell you that the issues of sexism and racism, although they have been confronted by the system and by the government in terms of laws and legislation, they still need to be confronted socially, in everyday society in Cuba. There continues to be racial discrimination in society and economic challenges facing Cubans of African descent due to external forces such as family remittances from abroad, which are received disproportionately by so-called “white” Cubans. Like so many other issues these are historically rooted obstacles that cannot be easily overcome. This is a very important struggle they are engaged in on a daily basis. There are many ongoing discussions and debates about these issues happening both inside and outside of Cuba. My favourite this is that when you ask Cubans, what do you think or what do Cubans as a whole think? They will say, ‘Well you know us Cubans, if you put 3 of us in a room, you’ll get 5 opinions!’ [laughter]

Cuba & the world

So most recently, especially in the last 3 years, headlines around the world have praised Cuba, as a country for its revolutionary internationalism, not for



Cuban veteran Golban Marin Valdivia, who fought with Che in Congo from meeting with Tamara Hansen in 2005



Cuban medical team arrives in Freetown, Sierra Leone, to battle Ebola crisis, 2014



sending soldiers as they did to Angola or the Congo, but for sending doctors.

Cuba was a huge part of sending doctors to West Africa during the fight against Ebola. Headlines read across the world, "Cuban doctors take leading role in fighting Ebola" (UK Telegraph), "Why Cuba Is So Good at Fighting Ebola" (Time Magazine), and "W.H.O. to Announce End of Ebola in Liberia, Thanks to Cuba" (Telesur), all of these headlines promoted Cuba's leading role in combating this global crisis. In October 2014, Comandante Fidel Castro wrote an article called, "Heroes of our time". He wrote, "May the example of the Cubans heading to Africa also capture the hearts and minds of other doctors around the world, especially those who possess resources, practice a religion or have the deepest conviction to fulfill the duty of human solidarity. [...] The personnel heading to Africa are also protecting those who remain here, because the worst that can happen is that this epidemic or other more serious illnesses reach our continent, or the heart of any community in any county in the world, where a child, mother or human being could die. There are enough doctors on the planet to

ensure that no one has to die due to lack of medical attention. This is what I wish to express."

Cuban doctors have also played an important role in Haiti after the earthquake there in 2010 and most recently after Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. In many ways, the vision of Fidel Castro changed over the last couple of decades, believing that the most important thing that Cuba could give to the world was health. That it is with health, education, and proper nourishment that new liberation fighters

will be born and more people will be able to educate themselves and come to the conclusion that the people of the world deserve a better world and a better future.

Fidel, Cuba, Africa & people of African descent

While the Cuban revolution has not been perfect. The amazing this about the leadership of the late Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution is that he was willing to talk about his mistakes and look for solutions and ways forward. In the struggle against racism and the struggle for justice and a better world, we have a lot to learn from what Cuba has been able to accomplish. Thank you.

Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter:
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Cubans in Santiago de Cuba at memorial for Fidel Castro, Dec. 3, 2016



Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership

By Tamara Hansen

"The battles Cuba has fought have not been easy. Some were physical battles, such as the battle against bandits in the Escambray Mountains or the Bay of Pigs invasion. However, most were not battles of physical might, but battles of ideas. But with every twist and turn, every up and down Fidel has been one of the first leaders to say, 'this way forward' or 'we made a wrong turn, we must change course.'"

Tamara Hansen is the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba ten times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.



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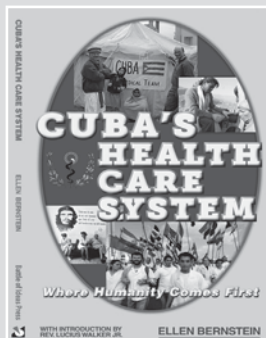
CUBA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WHERE HUMANITY COMES FIRST

BY ELLEN BERNSTEIN

"The unfailing dedication of Cuban health care professionals has led to dramatic improvements in quality of life, for millions of people who previously had no other hope of receiving decent medical care. IFCO/Pastors for Peace is pleased to honor the diligent health care professionals of the Cuban health care system. We especially pay tribute to Cuba's national leadership, whose vision of universal health care as a right of every citizen sets an example for the world."

Ellen Bernstein has served as Associate Director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) since 2003.

She has been a key staff member of IFCO's project Pastors for Peace, and has been deeply and integrally involved in IFCO's historic work with Cuba.



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“Never has it been more necessary to effectively advance along the path of unity”

Speech by Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, President of the Councils of State and Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, at the 5th CELAC Summit, in Punta Cana, the Dominican Republic, on January 25, 2017, “Year 59 of the Revolution.”

Esteemed President Medina;

Esteemed Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean;

Distinguished Heads of Delegations and guests:

At the Summit that gave life to this Community, in Caracas in 2011, we expressed the conviction that “unity and the political, economic, social and cultural integration of Latin America and the Caribbean constitute (...) a requirement for the region to successfully confront the challenges before us.”

Never has it been more necessary to effectively advance along the path of unity, recognizing that we have many common interests. Working for “unity within diversity” is an urgent need.

To achieve this, strict adherence to the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed by Heads of State and Government in Havana in January 2014, is required, in which we commit ourselves “to strict compliance with their obligation not to intervene, directly or indirectly, in the internal affairs of any other State,” and to resolve differences in a peaceful manner, as well as to “fully respect the inalienable right of every State to choose its political, economic, social and cultural system.”

It is therefore essential that all members of the international community fully respect the principles of the Proclamation in their relations with CELAC countries.

It would be desirable for the new United States government to opt for respect for the region, although it is a matter of concern that intentions have been declared that endanger our interests in the areas of trade, employment, migration and the environment,

among others.

It is therefore imperative to establish common courses of action and to make the organization of CELAC more effective.

Furthermore, a return of neoliberalism would increase poverty and unemployment, thus aggravating social conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mr. President:

We reiterate our support to the Venezuelan people and government in the defense of their sovereignty and self-determination in the face of acts against the Bolivarian Revolution.

We will continue to contribute to the extent of our possibilities to the implementation of the Final Peace Accord between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP and to supporting the peace talks with the ELN.

We reaffirm that the nation of Puerto Rico must be free and independent; we will continue to support the demands of Ecuador in the face of the refusal of transnationals to repair the serious environmental damages in the Amazon; we reject the political manipulation against the Bolivian government and the attempts to destabilize the country; we congratulate President Daniel Ortega for his recent re-election as leader of Nicaragua and also Vice President Rosario Murillo.

We reiterate our rejection of the parliamentary-judicial coup d'état perpetrated in Brazil against President Dilma Rousseff, to whom we express our solidarity, as well as to former president Luis Inácio Lula da Silva.

We reaffirm Cuba's support for the sister Caribbean nations in the face of attempts to deprive them of access to financial resources, in the fight against climate change and in their legitimate claim for reparation for the damages of colonialism and slavery.

We reiterate our encouragement for the efforts of the Argentine Republic to recover the Islas Malvinas, South Georgia and the

South Sandwich Islands.

Esteemed President:

I wish to express Cuba's willingness to continue negotiating pending bilateral issues with the United States, on the basis of equality, reciprocity and respect for the sovereignty and independence of our country, and to continue the respectful dialogue and cooperation on issues of common interest with the new government of President Donald Trump.

Cuba and the United States can cooperate and coexist in a civilized manner, respecting differences and promoting all that benefits both countries and peoples, but it should not be expected that to do so Cuba will make concessions inherent to its sovereignty and independence.

The economic, commercial and financial blockade persists, which causes considerable hardships and human damages that severely harm our economy and hamper development.

Despite this, we continue immersed in the updating of our economic and social model and we will continue to fight to build a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable nation.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to President Danilo Medina for his heartfelt tribute in remembrance of the Comandante en Jefe of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, at the opening ceremony of this Summit, as well as to all those who sent us their condolences and messages of solidarity

Let me conclude by thanking you and the Dominican people for your hospitality and warm welcome, and congratulating you for the work carried out in heading the CELAC Pro Tempore Presidency; and at the same time express our commitment of support and solidarity to El Salvador and its president Salvador Sánchez Cerén, in his administration on leading the Community during 2017.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

Discurso pronunciado por el General de Ejército Raúl Castro Ruz, Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros de la república de Cuba, en la V Cumbre de la CELAC, en Punta Cana, República Dominicana, el 25 de enero de 2017, "Año 59 de la Revolución".

Estimado presidente Medina;

Estimadas Jefas y Jefes de Estado o de Gobierno de América Latina y el Caribe;

Distinguidos Jefes de Delegaciones e invitados:

En la Cumbre que dio vida a esta Comunidad, en Caracas, en 2011, expresamos la convicción de que 'la unidad e integración política, económica, social y cultural de América Latina y el Caribe constituye (...) una necesidad para enfrentar con éxito los desafíos que se nos presentan como región'.

Nunca ha sido más necesario marchar efectivamente por el camino de la unidad, reconociendo que tenemos numerosos intereses en común. Trabajar por la 'unidad en la diversidad' es una necesidad impostergable.

Para alcanzarla, se requiere un estricto apego a la Proclama de la América Latina y el Caribe como Zona de Paz, firmada por los Jefes de Estado y Gobierno en La Habana en enero de 2014, en la que nos comprometimos 'con el estricto cumplimiento de su obligación de no intervenir, directa o indirectamente, en los asuntos internos de cualquier otro Estado,' y a resolver las diferencias de forma pacífica, así como a 'respetar plenamente el derecho inalienable de todo Estado a elegir su sistema político, económico, social y cultural'.

Para ello, es indispensable que todos los miembros de la comunidad internacional respeten plenamente los postulados de la Proclama en sus relaciones con los países de la CELAC.

Sería deseable que el nuevo gobierno de Estados Unidos opte por el respeto a la región, aunque es preocupante que haya declarado intenciones que ponen en riesgo nuestros intereses en las esferas del comercio, el empleo, la migración y el medio ambiente, entre otras.

Por tanto, es imprescindible establecer cursos de acción comunes y hacer más efectiva la gestión de la CELAC.

Por otra parte, un retorno del neoliberalismo incrementaría la pobreza y el desempleo, agravando así las condiciones sociales en la América Latina y el Caribe.

Señor Presidente:

Reiteramos nuestro apoyo al pueblo y gobierno venezolanos en la defensa de su soberanía y autodeterminación ante las acciones contra la Revolución Bolivariana. Seguiremos contribuyendo en la medida de nuestras posibilidades a la implementación del Acuerdo Final de Paz entre el Gobierno de Colombia y las FARC-EP y apoyando las conversaciones de paz con el ELN.

hermanas naciones caribeñas ante los intentos de privarles del acceso a recursos financieros, en el enfrentamiento al cambio climático, y en su reclamo legítimo de reparación por los daños del colonialismo y la esclavitud.

Reiteramos nuestro aliento a los esfuerzos de la República Argentina para recuperar las Islas Malvinas, las Georgias del Sur y las Sandwich del Sur.

Estimado Presidente:

Deseo expresar la voluntad de Cuba de continuar negociando los asuntos bilaterales pendientes con Estados Unidos, sobre la base de la igualdad, la reciprocidad y el respeto a la soberanía y la independencia de nuestro país, y de proseguir el diálogo respetuoso y la cooperación en temas de interés común con el nuevo gobierno del presidente Donald Trump.

Cuba y Estados Unidos pueden cooperar y convivir civilizadamente, respetando las diferencias y promoviendo todo aquello que beneficie a ambos países y pueblos, pero no debe esperarse que para ello Cuba realice concesiones inherentes a su soberanía e independencia.

El bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero persiste, lo que provoca considerables privaciones y daños humanos que lesionan gravemente nuestra economía y dificulta el desarrollo.

Pese a ello, continuamos enfrascados en la actualización de nuestro modelo económico y social y seguiremos luchando por construir una Nación soberana, independiente, socialista, democrática, próspera y sostenible.

Quisiera expresar mi profundo agradecimiento al presidente Danilo Medina por su sentido homenaje de recordación al Comandante en Jefe de la Revolución Cubana, Fidel Castro Ruz, en el acto inaugural de esta Cumbre, así como a todos aquellos que nos enviaron sus condolencias y mensajes de solidaridad.

Permítame, para concluir, agradecerle a usted y al pueblo dominicano por la hospitalidad y cálida acogida y felicitarlos por la labor desempeñada al frente de la Presidencia Pro Tempore de la CELAC; y al mismo tiempo manifestar nuestro compromiso de apoyo y solidaridad a El Salvador y a su presidente Salvador Sánchez Cerén, en su gestión al frente de la Comunidad durante el 2017.

Muchas gracias (Aplausos).

Nunca ha sido más necesario marchar efectivamente por el camino de la unidad



Reafirmamos que el pueblo de Puerto Rico debe ser libre e independiente; continuaremos apoyando los reclamos de Ecuador ante la negativa de las trasnacionales a reparar los graves daños ambientales en la Amazonía; rechazamos la manipulación política contra el gobierno boliviano y los intentos de desestabilizar el país; felicitamos al presidente Daniel Ortega por su reciente reelección al frente de Nicaragua y también a la vicepresidenta Rosario Murillo.

Reiteramos nuestro rechazo al golpe de estado parlamentario-judicial perpetrado en Brasil contra la presidenta Dilma Rousseff, a la que expresamos nuestra solidaridad, al igual que al presidente Luis Inácio Lula da Silva.

Confirmamos el apoyo de Cuba a las

- FIRE THIS TIME FORUM - **FIDEL & THE CUBAN REVOLUTION: HOW FAR WE HAVE COME**

By Tamara Hansen

Fidel & the Cuban Revolution: How Far We Have Come

On Friday January 21, 2017 Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice organized a free public forum, "Fidel & the Cuban Revolution: How Far We Have Come." The forum reflected on the life, legacy and accomplishments of Comandante Fidel Castro two months after his passing. It was also a chance to review some of the accomplishments of poor and working Cubans throughout their triumphant and ongoing revolution. Forty people gathered at Joe's Café on Commercial Drive in Vancouver to participate in this important community forum.

The event began with videos highlighting Cuba's response to the passing of Comandante Fidel and the importance of his leadership to the Cuban people. At the same time, recognizing the world context, videos were also shown about the gains of Cuban women through the revolution and the future of U.S.-Cuba relations. MC, Alison Bodine, a member of the Fire This Time Newspaper Editorial board, explained that this was based on the understanding that the forum took place on the same day as the historic women's marches in Vancouver and around the world for women's rights in the face of U.S. president Donald Trump's inauguration the day before. Alison also remarked that many were wondering about how President Trump might change U.S. government policies towards Cuba, so that was also included in the program.

Alison then introduced Tamara Hansen, the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in



Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and author of the book "Five Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership" (Battle of Ideas Press, 2010). Tamara spoke about the importance of Comandante Fidel Castro's leadership in the Cuban revolution, as well as some of the threats U.S. President Trump had uttered about U.S.-Cuba relations during his presidential campaign and the importance of increasing Cuba solidarity work in Canada and around the world.

Following Tamara's talk there was a lively discussion with questions and comments on everything from the controversial aspects of the Cuban revolution to personal anecdotes about the passing of Comandante Fidel.

The forum wrapped up with Tamara reminding everyone about the 7th International Che Guevara Conference coming up in Vancouver October 27-29 2017 with the theme of "From the Russian Revolution to the Cuba Revolution: The Question of Leadership & Implementing The Socialist Project & Where We Are Today". Tamara encouraged everyone to get involved in supporting this project and helping to bring the spirit of Comandante Fidel and the Cuban revolution to Canada!

*Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter:
@THans01*

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#J20Resist Demanding: Resist Trump! Resist War! From Washington DC to Vancouver BC

By Janine Solanki



On Friday January 20th, Donald Trump was inaugurated as the next President of the United States. This is a man who rode on a campaign of fear mongering, Islamophobia and racism, and who now is at the highest office of the most powerful imperialist country with by far the largest military in the world. However war, racism and Islamophobia is not unique to Trump. The US has been leading a new era of war and occupation for the last 16 years which has caused the destruction of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen and many other countries through their wars, occupations, sanctions, covert and overt military interventions and drone strikes. However Trump as US president accelerates the US war drive as he has promised to boost US military spending and the capacity to wage war, including the potential of nuclear warfare. Trump has also made it clear that he will wage a war at home too, with his anti-immigrant and refugee rhetoric and policies which attack women, Latino, Muslim, Black, Indigenous and other oppressed communities.

With the inauguration of Trump, antiwar and social justice activists in the US were clear that this is no time to sit and wait for his first actions, but to stand up against Trump from the very beginning of his

presidency. In Washington DC actions were organized to protest against Trump, as close to the inauguration as possible, with tens of thousands protesting in a march from Union Station to the White House, a rally at the Navy Memorial and along points of the inaugural parade route. Across the US in many other cities more protests took place, as well as solidarity actions around the world including in Sydney, London, Hong Kong, Berlin as well as cities in West Bank, Palestine

Vancouver, Canada also answered the call to protest Trump's inauguration, and Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) organized their monthly antiwar demonstration in coordination with the #J20Resist US and worldwide protests on January 20th. Peace and social justice minded people came out to the rally at the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery in Downtown Vancouver, where MAWO had setup an informational table which was busy with passers-by signing petitions and discussing with organizers. The rally began with Kelly White, a Coast Salish Indigenous Elder who gave a welcoming to the protest. The rally was MC'd by Alison Bodine, the MAWO chair, who led the crowd in energetic chants of "Resist Trump! Resist War! Resist Islamophobia!"

Alison invited up Thomas Davies who spoke on behalf of Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice on the ongoing antiwar movement which has been protesting under US presidents Bush, Obama and under Trump needs to continue even stronger. Brian Sproule spoke on behalf of the Communist Party of Canada Marxist-Leninist. The crowd also heard songs of resistance from local musician Zane, who shared his music in support of the rally. Zane was followed by speakers Janine Solanki who spoke from MAWO about the new era of war and occupation and the necessity to get involved in the antiwar movement, and Tamara Hansen from Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice spoke about the ruling class attempts to divide people with Islamophobia and racism, and to call for unity. Direct from the protests in Washington, DC, the rally heard from Sara Flounders who was a main organizer of the #J20Resist Washington DC protests and is the co-director of the International Action Center. Sara reported on the actions protesting the inauguration, and was able to hear the chants of support and solidarity from Vancouver's rally. The rally closed with Indigenous activist Wanita along with her family who raised the voices of youth and future in powerful drumming and song.

The rally closed with the commitment to continue educating, organizing and mobilizing against war and occupation and to demand:

Resist Trump!
Resist War!
Resist Islamophobia!
Resist Racism!
Resist Sexism!
Resist All Oppression!

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AFRO-DESCENDANTS IN THE BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION OF VENEZUELA



*Speech by Wilfredo Pérez Bianco**
Translated by Tamara Hansen

To kick off Black History Month the African Descent Society BC organized a daylong "Forum on People African Descent". Mr. Wilfredo Perez Bianco, Venezuelan Consul General in Vancouver, was invited as one of five distinguished guests to speak about the gains made for Venezuelan's of African descent by the Bolivarian revolution. His talk was met with one of the loudest applauses of the day. Fire This Time is honoured to print an extended version of his remarks.

Good afternoon and thank you very much to the African Descent Society of BC for the invitation, and the opportunity to present and share experiences in this important forum, which is a free exchange for discussion, debate and defense of Afrodescendence in the world.

Afro-descendants in Venezuela

During the transatlantic slave trade, about 100,000 African slaves were taken to Venezuela and their work fueled an agricultural economy based on coffee and cocoa. Slavery had a deep impact on the history and demography of Venezuela and even after it was abolished in 1854, freedom did not bring equality. Racism persisted throughout the 20th century until today, and African heritage was denied with an emphasis on racial mixing.

Afro-descendants in Revolution

The claims of the history of Afro-descendants in Venezuela have always been celebrated in the Bolivarian Revolution, which is based on cultural and social principles, on the rescue of ancestral identity, values and beliefs of the

Venezuelan people, as well as the inheritance and struggle for dignity and the defense of the history of Afro-Venezuelans. We believe in non-discrimination, inclusion, equality and equity.

Since 1998, when President Chávez was elected (exactly 18 years ago), Venezuela has achieved through government initiatives unprecedented advances in the fight against racism and national recognition of our African heritage. Some examples of this include:

- Adoption of a new Constitution, which establishes that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is "multi-ethnic and a multi-ethnic society" that "guarantees the right to life, work, culture, education, social justice and equality without discrimination or any subordination", guided by the principle of equality between cultures (1999).
- Creation of social missions to reduce poverty among historically marginalized groups (since 2003).
- Creation of the Presidential Commission for the prevention and elimination of all forms of racial discrimination in the education system (2005), thanks to the recognition in the Constitution of an intercultural education.
- The celebration in May of Afrodescendence and Afrovenezolanidad Day (2005) as a tribute to José Leonardo Chirinos, who led the African rebellion for equality, against the Spanish colonial authorities in 1795.
- Creation of the Liaison Office for Afro-Descendant Communities of the Ministry of Popular Power for Culture (2005).
- Creation of a Vice-Ministry for Foreign Affairs with Africa, where Venezuela now has 18 embassies (2005), including Angola, Congo, Mali, and Morocco.
- Since 2006, the World Africa Week,

has been held in Venezuela "a space for discussion, debate and exchange of ideas on Afro-descendants in Venezuela, African history, the contribution of Africans to our culture, the fight against discrimination and the development of Afro-descendant manifestations."

- Subsequently, a new Organic Law on Education was approved in 2009, which addresses the rights of Afro-descendants in five of its articles. "The law requires educational institutions to teach about the history of Afro-descendants and prohibits the media from transmitting messages of discrimination against indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples"
 - Approval of the Law against Racial Discrimination (2011), which was materialized thanks to the impetus of Afro-descendant organizations in Venezuela who have been promoting initiatives to protect and empower Afro-descendants. This Act prohibits organizations and activities that promote racial discrimination; Urges the State to guarantee the right to political, economic, social and cultural participation for all Venezuelans; Promotes tolerance and respect for cultural diversity.
 - The creation in 2011 of the Center for African, American and Caribbean Knowledge, an area of research and formation of African culture that aims to promote the linguistic and cultural productive integration between our peoples to revalue the historical and collective memory of the Ancestral links in terms of the growth and well-being of peoples of African origin.
 - Inclusion of Afro-descendants in the national census (2011). According to it, Venezuela had a total population of 28,946,101 inhabitants.
- The national census conducted in 2011





Venezuelan Afro-Descendant leaders meeting with President Nicolás Maduro. Sept. 2015

was the first to allow citizens to identify themselves as Afro-descendants, an important step in raising awareness and in the visibility of this population. As a result, approximately 54% of the Venezuelan population has Afro-descendant roots.

- Creation of the Council for the Development of Afro-Descendant Communities (CONADECAFRO), whose mission is to strengthen national and regional and international cooperation for the benefit of people of African descent, in relation to the full enjoyment of rights Economic, cultural, social, civil and political rights and the promotion of a greater knowledge and respect of the diversity of the inheritance and the culture of these people

Likewise, since 1999 Venezuela's foreign policy has taken a significant turn in its international relationship.

The new political reconfiguration of the Revolutionary project promoted the principles of pluripolarity, fundamental for unity, development and integration among the peoples of the whole of America.

One example of this is that "In mid-2005, Hugo Chavez transcended international relations with the sister countries of Africa, establishing diplomatic relations with 54 African nations, making Venezuela the only state in the world with bilateral ties to this

continent".

"With this new geopolitical map of relationships, the strategic lines and the creation of an Africa Agenda, generated in our country annual programming of diplomatic, political, cultural, educational and health activities jointly with the African nations under the motto: The Diplomacy of the Peoples".

Also on September 27, 2009, President Hugo Chávez installed the II Summit of Heads of State and Government of South America and Africa (ASA), which was a new alternative to redesign cooperation between South America and Africa. "The beginning of this road is the beginning to the salvation of our peoples ... Africa and South America have much to do for this new world," Chávez stressed in his speech during the Summit.

Regional Solidarity: an example of adversity

In October 2014, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) promoted a regional and global campaign to combat the Ebola virus, which killed thousands of people mainly from West Africa.

This is the largest event in recent years and has continued to affect various countries around the world. The Latin American organization supported through the Cuban doctors the logistic sanitary processes that would allow to stop the virus before taking new dimensions.

President Nicolás Maduro, responding to the call of the Secretary General of the United Nations and the World Health Organization, urged the member countries of Alba to make every effort to confront the epidemic by saying that "we have mutual trust, between countries and governments" to combat Ebola.

In this way, Latin America and the Caribbean, regional organizations and the new global geopolitical architecture provided the



impetus for a new international order with the countries and agencies of Africa, which opened the horizon for multicentrism and pluripolarity that the Eternal Commander, Hugo Chávez, devised for the development, union and integration of peoples.

Similarly, in 2016 the former Executive Vice-President, Aristóbulo Istúriz, held a bilateral meeting with his South African counterpart Cyril Ramaphosa earlier this year to discuss different economic alliances. He also held a meeting with the South African Vice Minister of Tourism, Tokozile Xasa, where they agreed on a meeting of tourism practices between the two countries, in the context of the activation of the South African-Venezuelan Joint Commission, such as promotion, services, investment and tourist hospitality.

As we can see, these laws and policies promoted by the Bolivarian Government for the benefit of Afro-Venezuelan communities have had the ultimate aim of highlighting the relevance and historical significance of Afrodescendence in our country, consolidating the presence of Africanist values and the African diaspora.

In conclusion, Commander Hugo Chávez, during an interview in 2005, said that "hatred against me has a lot to do with racism. By my mouth, by my curly hair. I am very proud of this mouth and this hair, because it is African."

Most recently, President Nicolás Maduro said: "We have to be proud of being from mixed heritage, it is the culture of joy, love, rebellion that faced hatred, slavery and racism", while convening the National union in order to eradicate all forms of discrimination in the country that still exists, with the promotion of a new culture of equality, especially through the media.

Long live Afrodescendence!
Long live the Afrovenezolanidad!
Long live Africa!
Long live the Patria Grande!
Thank you so much!



OUR HERITAGE



Sojourner Truth
1797-1883

Sojourner was born into slavery but escaped to freedom in 1826 to become an important anti-slavery organizer and leader, as well as a women's rights activist. This is part of a speech delivered in 1851 at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio

"That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?"

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them."

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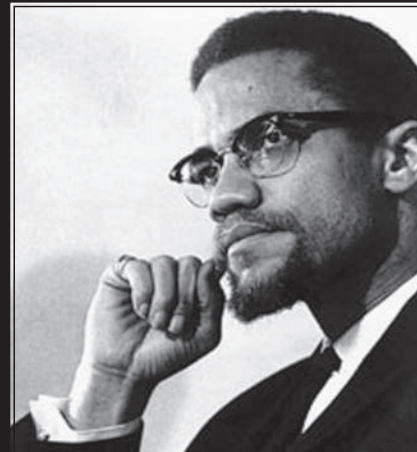
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"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Excerpt from "Oxford Debate"

December 3, 1964

But most people usually think, in terms of extremism, as something that is relative, related to someone they know or something that they've heard of, I don't think they look upon extremism by itself, or all alone. They apply it to something. A good example—and one of the reasons that this can't be too well understood today—many people who have been in positions of power in the past don't realize that the power, the centers of power, are changing. When you're in a position of power for a long time you get used to using your yardstick, and you take it for granted that because you've forced your yardstick on others, that everyone is still using the same yardstick. So that your definition of extremism usually applies to everyone, but nowadays times are changing, and the center of power is changing. People in the past who weren't in a position to have a yardstick or use a yardstick of their own are using their own yardstick now. You use one and they use another. In the past when the oppressor had one stick and the oppressed used that same stick, today the oppressed are sort of shaking the shackles and getting yardsticks of their own, so when they say extremism they don't mean what you do, and when you say extremism you don't mean what they do. There are entirely two different meanings. And when this is understood I think you can better understand why those who are using methods of extremism are being driven to them.

¡Venceremos!

A Great Victory for Working and Oppressed People

Chelsea Manning and Oscar López Are Freed

In the final days of his Presidential term, Barack Obama announced that two important political prisoners held in U.S. jails would be released. People around the world are celebrating the forthcoming freedom of U.S. soldier turned Wikileaks whistleblower Chelsea Manning, and Puerto Rican independence leader Oscar López Rivera. Their release is a victory which took years of tireless campaigning to achieve.

Chelsea Manning served in the U.S. Army during the Iraq War. She was responsible for leaking nearly 260,000 classified U.S. diplomatic cables, as well as videos and documents. Published on the whistleblower site Wikileaks, they further exposed U.S. war crimes around the world. Chelsea was sentenced to 35 years in jail. After seven years of imprisonment Obama commuted all but four months of the 28 years of Manning's remaining sentence.

Oscar López Rivera is a Puerto Rican independence leader who has already served 36 years of a 70 year prison sentence. At the time of his capture, he proclaimed himself a prisoner of war, protected in the first protocol of the Geneva Convention of 1949. The protocol protects Lopez from prosecution for having been arrested in a conflict against colonial occupation. The U.S. did not recognize Lopez' demand, and he served more than 12 of his 36 years in solitary confinement. Obama commuted his sentence.

Both Chelsea Manning and Oscar Lopez will be freed on May 17, 2017.

Despite these two positive development, Obama also blatantly ignored many other political prisoners, among them Mumia Abu Jamal and Leonard Peltier.

Imprisoned since 1982, Mumia Abu Jamal has served 34 years of a life sentence for the unproven killing of a Philadelphia police officer. Amnesty International said Mumia's trial "failed to meet international standards" due to a severe climate of racism and hostility. He suffers from diabetes and his health is constantly at risk due to improper medical treatment.

Leonard Peltier was convicted for the deaths of two FBI agents who died during a 1975 shoot-out on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. In a trial full of discrimination and manipulations, the prosecution even conceded that they did not know who shot the agents. He has been in prison for over 41 years, with a projected release date of October 11, 2040 at the age of 96. He also suffers from diabetes, high blood pressure, and a heart condition which make the need for his immediate freedom even more important.

Two important factors brought about the freedom of Chelsea Manning and Oscar López: their dedication to the social justice causes they were defending, and the ongoing campaigns demanding their release by people around the world. Both Mumia and Leonard have shown their incredible spirits of resistance, and we must continue to support the ongoing international campaigns demanding their freedom.

FREE LEONARD PELTIER NOW!
FREE MUMIA ABU JAMAL NOW!
FREE ALL U.S. POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW!

Goal Complete: Venezuela Builds 1.4 Mil Homes For Poor Families

January 27, 2017 (Telesur English)

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro announced Thursday that the government has reached the goal of delivering 1,400,000 homes to Venezuelans across the country.

"Today we reach an incredible goal, after so much war: 1,400,000 homes built and delivered to our people. Let's continue winning," Maduro posted to his Twitter account.



We Will Win!

Cuba and Chicago initiate health care collaboration

January 12, 2017 (Granma)

CHICAGO.—With the visit by three Cuban experts to the city of Chicago, a collaboration project between the University of Illinois and the Cuban Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) began this week, as part of which Cuban and U.S. professionals will work to evaluate health care for vulnerable and low-income communities in the city of Chicago, in order to suggest measures to contribute to improving their health indicators.

The visit will extend through January 13, and marks the beginning of a joint work program, the first stage of which will last approximately one year and will be focused on maternal and child care and on cancer screening and prevention, according to a press release from the Cuban Foreign Ministry.

During their stay in Chicago, Cuban doctors Sonia María González Vega, director of Primary Health Care in the municipality of Camagüey; José Armando Arronte Villamarín, Provincial Health director in Las Tunas, and Carlos Calvis Cabrera, coordinator of the island's International Medical Brigades, will exchange with representatives of health centers, universities and other community actors on the experiences and strategies of the Cuban health system, based on preventive medicine.

Regarding the project, Dr. Robert A. Winn, associate vice chancellor for community-based practice and director of the University of Illinois Cancer Center, stated the hope to work with Cuban professionals "to identify the medical practices that have worked for them, while allowing them to observe some of the ways we deliver health care that may be very different from how they operate, in the hopes that this exchange will lead to improved health for populations in both our countries".

The public housing program is either free or low of cost, depending on the family's means.

In another message, he said that despite the economic war and the drop of over 70 percent in crude oil prices, his government has not stopped investing in social care policies.

"In 2016, foreign exchange earnings fell by 87 percent and we built twice as many new homes for our people. Doing more with less. (We are) succeeding," he said.

The mission was first launched to provide housing for Venezuelans who lost their homes in the devastating 2010 floods. However, since then the GMV has been expanded to provide low-cost housing to the wider population. In 2011, then-President Hugo Chavez explained the mission would address the "social debt" left behind by former governments that failed to provide quality housing to all Venezuelans.

The project aimed to involve Venezuelans in the process as much as possible, with home owners responsible for 60 percent of town planning.

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VIDEO CLIPS

- AFRO-CUBAN HIP-HOP
- CUBAN DOCTORS IN HAITI
- CUBA & THE FIGHT AGAINST APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

ANGELA GILLIAM

FACULTY EMERITA AT EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE
ON "RACE IN TODAY'S CUBA: LESSONS FOR THE AMERICAS"

Live Music, Poetry & Multimedia Event

FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH
& MARKING THE UN DECADE OF PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Friday February 17, 2017

Cafe Deux Soleils

2096 COMMERCIAL DR

DOORS 9 PM

\$10 SUGGESTED DONATION AT THE DOOR
(NO ONE TURNED AWAY FOR LACK OF FUNDS)

VCSC
VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES IN SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA
AFRICANDESCENTSOCIETYBC@GMAIL.COM | 604-355-4434
VANCUBASOLIDARITY@GMAIL.COM | 778-882-5223

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INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT 2015 - 2024